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ABSTRACT

A classroom companion to "Word History: A Guide to Understanding the English Language," this book provides teachers with additional information to help them include the study of word history in their classroom routine. The book presents suggestions and activities that can be used to challenge students to play with words; to give teachers brief explanations for the origins of selected words; to provide exercises that students can work on by themselves; to give teachers sample week-long plans for certain kinds of word study; and to provide supplementary activities for ideas presented in the companion book. Teachers may use the book as a guide to a concentrated study of word history, or as a source of daily 5- to 10-minute brainteasers. The book also presents extensive annotations of six ERIC documents that serve the classroom teacher and an 11-item annotated bibliography of books that move beyond the introductory material in the book and its companion volume. (RS)

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Word History:

A Resource Book for the Teacher

by Carl B. Smith and Eugene W. Reade

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WORD HISTORY:

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Carl B. Smith

and

Eugene W. Reade

A companion to WORD HISTORY:

A Guide to Understanding the English Language

ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading,
English, and Communication

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How to Use this Book

The study of word history can interest and challenge your students. Whether seen as an archaeological dig or as a way of gaining power through words, word history gives students the sense that they are reaching into their roots for understanding and connectedness. All of a sudden, words take on color and meaning they did not have before their origins were studied. The word *microscope,* for example, becomes more than a bundle of sounds referring to an instrument that magnifies small objects; it is a word containing two Greek roots that mean "to see" (*scope,* from *skopos)* "the small" (*micro*). And that bit of knowledge opens new understanding to words like *microwave* and *microchip.*

No matter what subject you teach, you will find that important words in your field have a history that will fascinate many of your students. By challenging them to analyze words, you actually lead your students to a more analytic study of the subject matter itself. Nuances in the meanings of words leads to a sharper view of the concepts you are studying. This is a win/win situation: You attract your students' attention through word history, and they gain a more precise insight into the topic of the day.

Traditionally, English teachers have led students to appreciate the rich history of the language they use, and this book appeals strongly to vocabulary study in the English classroom. But it takes only a quick thumb test to see that any teacher can use ideas from this book to tickle the interest of students about words they use to study history, science, math, government, health, or any other subject.

Classroom Companion

This Resource Book is a classroom companion to *Word History: A Guide to Understanding the English Language* by Carl B. Smith and Eugene W. Reade. That first volume gives an overview of the development of English for the past 1500 years and provides the background for teachers who want to study language history. (On the following pages, that earlier volume will usually be referred to by the shortened title *A Guide to Understanding.*)

In this book you will find information that can help you include the study of word history in your classroom routine. It is an idea book filled with suggestions and activities that can be used

- to challenge students to play with words
- to give teachers brief explanations for the origins of selected words
- to provide exercises that students can work on by themselves
- to give teachers sample week-long plans for certain kinds of word study
- to provide supplementary activities for ideas presented in *A Guide to Understanding*

Sample Uses

Some teachers may use this book as a guide to a concentrated study of word history, treating it as a one-month course that raises the level of consciousness of students and urges them to make word study a continuing part of their education. Other teachers may want to make this a five- to ten-minute brain teaser each day for a semester. In this way, students get short, repeated reminders of their need to expand their vocabularies. This means that teachers don't have to preach about the value of vocabulary building; rather, they can use history to make the point clear.

This Resource Book offers practical ideas and techniques for turning word study into a lively historical adventure. It does this by

- suggesting ways of organizing and implementing the study of word history in the classroom,
- providing a number of exercises that allow students to work with the language of each period,
- summarizing valuable ERIC documents that serve the classroom teacher, and
- giving an annotated bibliography of books that move beyond the introductory material in this book and its companion volume.

I

Suggestions for Implementing the Study of Word History

The Importance and Relevance of This Study

The value of studying word history becomes evident when we consider these points:

- Students become interested in language when they see it as something more than a free-flowing assortment of words. Language reflects thought, and thoughts can be expressed more clearly and precisely if we understand the principles of organization on which the English language is built. The reasons for present-day conventions of spelling and grammar can best be understood if we discover *how* those conventions evolved over the past fifteen centuries.

- Because grammar, spelling, and literature itself are influenced by history, knowledge of this history provides a rationale and a framework for the study of the English language and its literature. Such knowledge also helps students focus on the reasonableness of the language and lets them know that it can be learned if it is viewed as a dynamic process, not as a set of rules in a textbook.

- Language learning, including vocabulary, takes place recursively across time; periodic growth and review are natural parts of learning. Therefore we have suggested ways of studying language history by integrating it into the curriculum on a regular basis, constantly reminding students of what they have studied earlier and showing how that information applies in other situations.

  Although it would certainly be desirable to devote occasional periods to concentrated study of earlier periods in the history of English, it is far more important to remind students that this historical knowledge applies to everything they read. For example, the latest developments in science and technology—even the most recent advances in space travel—are all described and identified in terms taken from the languages of the Greeks, Romans, and Anglo-Saxons who lived centuries ago.

- As much as possible, the study of vocabulary should be tied to the literature that students are reading and to their writing as well. After a period of direct teaching of vocabulary, teachers should ask students to apply their knowledge in their reading and writing.

  For example, students may read that Washington, D.C., became the nation's *capital* in 1800 just before Thomas Jefferson's inauguration. Elsewhere they may read of the large amount of *capital* required to start a new business, while in still another passage they may see reference to the *capitals* of columns on buildings of ancient Greece. They may also see examples of the styles of *capital* letters in alphabets of various languages throughout history, or they may read that "Everyone thought this was a *capital* idea" or "The defendant was accused of a *capital* crime."

Rather than gloss over these different uses of the same word, students should be encouraged to distinguish among the various meanings and discover how the word evolved over time. They will learn that the Latin word *caput* (head) is the source of most of these meanings, while the related Latin word *capitalis* (referring to the head or to life) was taken into French and Italian, where it acquired its meanings relating to accumulated goods or money in particular. They will also see that the Old French word *capital* entered Middle English around the year 1200. Thus, this single word has evolved for centuries and acquired a host of meanings, all related in varying degrees to the Latin original.

- The more they become involved in searching for information and figuring out the language puzzle, the more students are likely to learn with enthusiasm. At every point they can become detectives following the trail leading from an unfamiliar word to a study of its origin, its changes over time, and its variety of meanings today. Such sleuthing can be especially rewarding with words such as capital that may seem familiar at first but which really contain far more shades of meaning than the student might suspect.

After even a limited introduction to the study of word history, students begin to see that there is constant interaction between their study of today's language, the study of literature of the past and present, and the study of how the English language developed over the past 1500 years. Most of what we read today can be related in some way to the development of the language throughout history, and everything we learn about the evolution of the language helps us to understand why we follow the conventions and practices of today.

As you begin to consider the development of the English language in your classes in grammar and literature, it will help to focus on the particular areas of word study that have the greatest practical application. The study of *spelling, vocabulary, semantics,* and *etymology* can show students how a knowledge of history enhances their understanding of present-day usage and conventions.

Spelling. Students will discover that some words containing silent letters and unusual combinations are spelled that way because they retain elements of their original spellings in which all letters did represent sounds (especially in Old English). This can also help when students see how Latin prefixes are assimilated (as with the prefix *ad-*, which changes to *ac-*, *af-*, *ap-*, or *at-* in words such as *accuse, affirm, approve,* and *attain,* for example). Furthermore, it can show how the original spelling and pronunciation of Greek words such as *psychē* and *chlōros* are reflected in present-day words such as *psychology* and *psychiatry, chlorine* and *chlorophyll.*

Vocabulary. Students will learn that the English lexicon—the complete stock of word roots and affixes—has grown by borrowing from many sources over the centuries. A better understanding of current meanings and usage can often be gained by knowing how these words originated and developed in the past. This will help students expand their knowledge by showing that many words are grouped into families, especially those sharing a common Latin or Greek root (as with *spectacle, speculate, aspect, suspect,* and *spectator,* all from the Latin *specere,* to see).

Semantics. This is specifically the study of the *meanings* of words. It focuses especially on the fact that some words had meanings in the past that are different from those of the present and that many words today have a variety of shades of meaning.

Etymology. This is the branch of linguistics that focuses on the history of words. The ability to trace the historical evolution of words and to understand the characteristics of each historical period gives students a broad framework into which they can place their knowledge of present-day usage. This knowledge lets students see how and why the English language reached its present state and lets them know that there are reasons for the principles now in force, even if those reasons show that some decisions in the past were based on limited knowledge of etymology, on a desire to make English conform to principles of Latin, or on even more arbitrary events such as those encountered in the early stages of printing.

Incorporating Word History into the Curriculum

Although it is desirable to devote some time to a chronological survey of the history of English, it may not always be practical to begin with such a study. This is especially true in earlier grades or with students who do not already have a strong background in European history.

The suggestions on the following pages build on what students already know and work back to a survey of the history of the language. Although this reverse chronological approach means that a comprehensive survey of language history will come near the end of the period of study rather than at the beginning, it does lay a foundation by making students aware that English has changed as it absorbed words from many languages in the past and that it will continue to change because it is a living language.

Words and Their Backgrounds

You can begin by making your students aware that the English lexicon has developed from a variety of sources over the past fifteen centuries. This can be done by selecting important words as they appear in reading material and by looking into the historical background as well as the meanings of these words. You may want to follow a procedure such as this:

- Make students aware that most of the English words we use today originated in other languages, not in the Germanic tongue of the Anglo-Saxons.
- Indicate the original language and give examples of the original spellings and meanings of these important words.
- Show how these words have been adapted to English.
- Briefly relate each word to its historical period by focusing on the most important events of that period.

The information provided in *A Guide to Understanding* can be used as the basis for a brief historical survey, and it can also provide more detailed information about the language and literature as this becomes relevant.

In the beginning, you can simply focus on individual words and make students aware of how these words evolved. Here are a few examples of the kind of information that can be developed as individual words are studied:

Sword is an Old English word originally spelled *sweord.* Old English began as a group of related Germanic dialects spoken by people called Anglo-Saxons who left northern Germany and began to settle in Britain in the fifth century. All consonants and vowels were sounded in Old English, which meant that *sweord* began with the sounds we use today at the beginning of *swap* and that the word originally had two syllables because each vowel was pronounced. In later centuries pronunciation became simplified and the word was spoken as a single syllable, but by that time the letters *sw* in the original spelling had been established in print even though the *w* was no longer spoken. This explains why we have the spelling convention (the "silent *w*") that may appear odd to students today.

Transportation is made up of two Latin word elements: *trans-* (across) and *portare* (to carry). In this case, knowledge of the Latin elements explains why the word has its current meaning. Many English words originated in Latin, the language spoken more than 2000 years ago in the Roman empire. Although Latin began to exert an influence on English as early as the seventh century, its greatest impact came in the period of Early Modern English in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Adventure entered Middle English in the early thirteenth century from the French word *aventure* (which is its current French spelling as well). Many words were borrowed from French during the period of Middle English (approximately 1100-1500), and often their spellings and pronunciations were changed by English speakers. This shows the process of adaptation (anglicization) through which many words have gone as they entered English from some other language. (Make sure students understand that the word *anglicize* means "to adapt a foreign word to English usage" and that the term refers to the earliest form of English spoken by the Germanic tribes called Angles and Saxons.)

This process of probing into the background of familiar words will begin to acquaint students with the fact that many English words originated in other languages. It will also relate these words to a simplified time frame and will show that this knowledge explains unusual spellings (*sword, knee, write,* for example) while in some cases unlocking the meaning of the roots from which present-day words evolved. These points should be emphasized repeatedly: They are among the most important and immediately relevant reasons for studying word history. Over time, such study will prepare students to reach the long-term goal of greater understanding of how the language has developed.

Throughout this book we will use the term *root* to refer to the specific portion of a present-day English word that has been taken from a preexisting word, usually one in another language. For example, the Latin verb *portare* provides the root *port-* that establishes the basic meaning "to carry" in *portable, transport, import,* and so on. By using only the term root to refer to these word parts, we avoid any confusion that students might experience if they were to try to deal with other terms such as *stem* and *base.*

Analyzing Words in Present-day Texts

You can choose any passage in modern-day English to serve as the starting point for the study of word history. Here is a good example:

> Biology is the scientific study of living things. There are more than 2 million species of living things on the earth. They range in size from

> microscopic bacteria to huge blue whales and towering redwood trees. (*World Book,* 1989, vol. 2, p. 316)

Before we can understand this passage, we must know the meaning of certain key words such as *biology* and *scientific* and *microscopic*. Students could just look for these words in a glossary or dictionary, but they are likely to understand them more clearly and to remember them if they know how these words entered the English language and what they meant in their original forms.

Why should the word *biology* be used to specify the scientific study of living things? The answer is found in the Greek words *bios,* meaning *life,* and *logos,* which originally meant *word* but which has also come to mean the body of information relating to a certain subject (*zoology* and *psychology,* for example). *Biology* is thus the body of knowledge (*-logy*) about life itself (*bios*).

Why has English borrowed so many words from other languages? Simply because the original Germanic language of the Anglo-Saxons did not contain "English" equivalents for the many Latin and Greek words that were encountered in later periods, especially during the Renaissance. The achievements of Greece and Rome in science and philosophy far exceeded anything known to those people who spoke Old English. Therefore, in order to broaden the English vocabulary, it was necessary to absorb and adapt words from their original languages.

As another example, we may find that the word *scientific* (in the excerpt quoted above) is an adjective derived from the noun *science,* which originated in the Latin word *scientia* (knowledge, skill). This word is itself derived from the Latin verb *scire* (to know). Therefore we can see that any branch of *science* is concerned with *knowing* all that can be discovered about the world in which we live.

The word *microscopic* is also fairly familiar to us, and we know that any word containing *micro-* will refer to something very small. In fact, the Latin *micro* evolved from the earlier Greek word *mikros,* meaning *small* or *short.* Today we constantly hear about *microfilm, microchips, microwave ovens,* and *microcomputers.* The word *scope* is also familiar; we know it has something to do with looking at objects. It, too, comes from a Greek word (*skopos*) which is derived from *skeptesthai,* meaning "to watch for, look at."

When students use a dictionary to examine the background of words, they discover that some words can be traced to a single source. However, many words have traveled through several languages and have changed their meanings over the years. Some words began in the Greek language and moved through Latin into French before reaching their current form in present-day English. Other words originated in early Germanic languages, moving from Old English through Middle English into their current form.

The Value and Limitations of Word Analysis

At this point it should be obvious that word analysis can often help students determine the meaning of a present-day word by leading them to discover the meanings of its elements. This is especially true with many words originating in Latin, such as *transport,* or in Greek, such as *microscope* (both discussed above). However, this approach will not *always* yield adequate information about words containing Latin or Greek elements, and it is a mistake to think that "the meaning" of a word can be deduced as the sum of its parts. Many words have a number of meanings, and other words have evolved far beyond the narrow limitations of their original components. Students can use dictionaries to search for the varied meanings of words and to discover which words do or do not conform exactly to the meaning of their affixes and roots. (For more extensive discussion of this point, see Lee C. Deighton, *Vocabulary Development in the Classroom;* New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1959.)

It is best to begin word analysis by looking at words that are already familiar to your students. Then these familiar words can provide the basis for further exploration into other words that share some common feature.

For example, although the Latin prefix *trans-* often suggests a change of position or movement from one place to another (*transportation, transcontinental*), it can also mean "through" (*transparent, translucent*). Furthermore, it can suggest a thorough, complete change (*transform, transfigure*). In a word such as *translate,* the complexity of elements in the original word has led to a number of shades of meaning. The Latin word *translatus* is the past participle of the verb *transferre* which originally meant "to transfer or translate." Because we tend to think of the word primarily in terms of changing written text from one language to another, we may overlook the broader idea of changing from one place, state, form, or appearance to another ("words translated into action"; "to translate a problem into mathematical symbols"; and so on).

To consider another example, the prefix *pre-* often does suggest the idea of placing something "earlier than" or "in front of" something else (*prefix, prehistoric, preparation, preface*). However, in some cases this meaning does not help us understand the current meanings of certain words.

The word *precise*, for example, is made up of the prefix *pre-* (from the Latin *prae-*, meaning "before, in front") and the Latin root *caedere* ("to cut"). However, to us the word *precise* is not a verb meaning "to cut before" but is usually an adjective meaning "exactly or sharply defined or stated; strictly correct." However, in the fifteenth century the French word *précis* did mean "condensed, cut short." After this word was taken into English, the meaning "strictly correct" gradually evolved in the sixteenth century. By that time, the original meanings of the Latin elements had faded into the background.

In other cases, *pre-* does not function as a prefix at all even though it appears to (*predator* and *precarious*, for example). Even the letters *dis-*, which often appear as a prefix meaning "to do the opposite" (as in *dislike* or *disappear*), can also appear at the beginning of words such as *dismay* and *dismal* where they no longer perform the clear function we expect from a prefix.

Exercises: Analyzing Individual Words

Words that *do* contain a clear match between current meanings and the meaning of their elements can be used to show students how words are constructed and how they are related by the common thread of meaning embodied in their roots and affixes. The following suggestions build on examples already discussed; you can adapt this approach to suit the needs of your students:

- Beginning with a word such as transport, made up of elements whose meanings are perfectly clear, ask students to think of some additional words beginning with the prefix *trans-* (*transmit, transfer*) and other words containing the root *port* (*import, export, portable*).

- Next, look again at the words you just listed that began with the prefix *trans-* (*transmit, transfer*) and try to think of other words built on the roots of these words: *permit, admit; refer, prefer;* and so on.
- Help students discover the meaning of the roots *mit* (from the Latin root *mittere,* to let go through) and *fer* (from Latin *ferre,* to bring or carry) and see how much of these original definitions is still embodied in the present-day word.
- In particular, students should examine prefixes such as *re-* (in *refer*) and *pre-* (in *prefer*) to see how closely their usual meanings apply in these cases.

Such exercises can lead students to discover the meaning of word elements in their original languages and to see how this information applies today. In other cases, students will see that words are more complex than they might appear and that they have evolved far beyond the limitations of their original meanings.

This is the case with *reduce,* for example, which is composed of the prefix *re-* (which can mean "again" or "anew" and can also mean "back" or "backward") and the root *duc* (from the Latin verb *ducere,* meaning "to lead"). The Middle English word *reducen* did retain the literal meaning "to lead back," a meaning which is less obvious to us today because we tend to think that the word means "to diminish something in size or amount." Students might look at the word *reduce* in an unabridged or collegiate dictionary to discover the many shades of meaning it does convey. (There are more than a dozen entries in Webster's *Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary,* for example).

Words in Context

You may analyze individual words for as long as you wish. This approach can prepare students to move on to a second stage focusing on the relationships of words in context and on a broader historical framework. Here you may follow a process such as this:

- Look at complete sentences or paragraphs rather than at isolated words.
- First, focus on those words from Old English. See their original spelling, discuss their function in Modern English, and relate them to their historical period.
- Do the same thing with words from Middle English, focusing on the French influence.
- Deal with the Latin and Greek words, many of which were introduced in the period of Early Modern English.
- Have students develop a summary of their findings in the preceding exercises. Such a summary can point out the differences in the types of words that most influenced English in each period.

On the following pages we will provide examples of exercises that can be used to implement this approach. These examples provide models that can be adapted and expanded to suit your own situation.

The first sample exercises outline a five-day sequence focusing on Old and Middle English. Each item represents a single activity that can be incorporated into a lesson on a given day, allowing ten or fifteen minutes. These exercises can begin by identifying specific words in context and asking students what the word seems to mean to them. Then analyze the individual components of the word (as in *trans- + port,* for example), Finally, look back at the complete sentence or paragraph to see how this analysis has enhanced your understanding of the word.

Exercises: Analyzing Words in Context

Old and Middle English

On the board or on separate sheets of paper, give a brief outline showing the major periods in the development of English in order to establish the time frame for each period. (This can be found in Chapter I of *A Guide to Understanding*). It may also help to have maps showing the movement of Anglo-Saxons into Britain in the fifth century, the invasions of Vikings beginning in the late eighth century, and the Norman invasion in 1066. Refer to these as needed throughout the discussions. (See Chapter II of *A Guide to Understanding* for this material.)

On the following pages we will outline a five-day sequence of study. The purpose of this set of exercises is to focus on words that have come down to us directly from Old English, which originated in the German languages of the Anglo-Saxons, and from Middle English, which borrowed many words from French. The influence of Latin also becomes evident on Day Four.

All exercises are based on a single paragraph, given on Day One, as the source of words to be studied. Although this set of exercises utilizes an article about space travel, you can follow a similar procedure with a paragraph that relates to your content area.

The activity for each day begins with a page marked EXERCISE. This is for student use; you can make copies of this page to hand out to each member of the class if you like. You may also want to hand out copies of some pages from *A Guide to Understanding* (especially pages 4, 7, and 30). Following each exercise page you will find ADDITIONAL INFORMATION that will help you elaborate on the exercise and direct class discussion.

Day One

Exercise

Read the beginning of the article on Space Travel in the *World Book:*

> Space travel is humanity's greatest adventure—the chance to explore the moon, the planets, and the stars. Giant rockets lift off with a roaring blast of orange flame. They climb into the blue sky, leaving a white trail. Then they speed out of sight into space, where the sky is always black and the stars always shine. Rockets may carry people on their way to conduct scientific experiments, or they may carry an artificial satellite to explore a distant planet. (1989, vol. 18, p. 694)

Focus on the following words, all of which are used in the first two sentences. Refer to a collegiate or unabridged dictionary to find the language in which each word originated. Also notice whether or not the meaning of the word has changed over the centuries.

is -

moon -

star -

lift -

off -

great -

roar -

blast -

Day One

Additional Information
for the teacher

All the words on the list originated in Old English, which began in the fifth century when the Anglo-Saxons began to settle in Britain. (See *A Guide to Understanding,* Chapter II.)

- Remind students of the geographical location of the countries involved (*A Guide to Understanding,* pages 5–9).
- Establish A.D. 449 as the year in which the Anglo-Saxons began their settlement of Britain.
- Use a map to show the route of these tribes across North Sea (*A Guide to Understanding,* page 7).
- Stress the *Germanic* origin of these people and their language.

The purpose of this exercise is to make students aware of the spellings of the original words and to show that their meanings have changed in some cases.

is (OE *is,* from German *ist*)

moon (OE *mōna*)

star (OE *steorra*)

lift (OE *lyft:* air)

off (OE *of*)

great (OE *grēat:* massive, tall, thick)

roar (OE *rārian:* to bleat)

blast (OE *blæst*)

Day Two

Exercise

Trace the history of the following words, also found in the first two sentences of the paragraph on space travel given on Day One. (In your dictionaries you may encounter the symbol <, which means "derived from.")

chance -

planet -

giant -

lift -

space -

travel -

* humanity -

adventure -

roar -

flame -

orange -

---

* Look for the word *human* in your dictionary in order to find information about its historical development.

Day Two

Additional Information
for the Teacher

The words on this list entered the language during the period of Middle English. (See *A Guide to Understanding,* Chapter III.)

- Establish the date of the Norman Conquest (1066) and use a map to indicate the geographical location of Normandy and England (*A Guide to Understanding,* pages 29–31).
- Discuss the effect of the French language on English during the period of Middle English from about 1100 to about 1500 (*A Guide to Understanding,* pages 32–35).
- Point out that most of these ME words are taken from French, although two of them existed in Old English. (French was itself derived from Latin, to be discussed later.)

Also point out that some words have not changed spelling since Middle English (*chance, orange*) while others have changed slightly (*planete, espace, liften*). For the words *lift* and *roar,* have students look back at the exercise for Day One to see how the Old English form of each word was spelled.

chance (ME *chance*)

planet (ME *planete,* from OF)*

giant (ME *giaunt,* OF *geant*)

* OF = *Old French,* the language spoken in France from the ninth to the thirteenth centuries.

lift (ME *liften* < OE)

space (ME *space*, from OF *espace*)

travel (ME *travailen*, from OF *travaillier*)

humanity (the present-day base *human* < ME *humain*, from MF**; from Latin *humanus*)

adventure (ME *aventure*, from OF)

roar (ME *roren*, < OE *rārian*)

flame (ME *flaume* < MF *flamme*)

orange (ME, from MF *orange*)

** MF = *Middle French*, the language spoken in France from the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries.

Day Three

Exercise

Find the original language and spelling of the following words, also taken from the first two sentences in the paragraph on space travel:

the -

to -

and -

with -

a -

of -

What kinds of words are these (nouns, verbs, adjectives, prepositions, etc.)? How are they used in each sentence?

Now find the original language and spelling for the following words. (These are not taken from the paragraph on space travel.)

day -

year -

hand -

knee -

sing -

write -

see -

What parts of speech are these words?

Day Three

Additional Information
for the teacher

As part of this exercise, summarize the periods of Old English and Middle English, stressing dates and geographical relationships. Then make sure students understand that the first two sentences in the article on space travel are held together by short function words (structure words) that show the relationships among the nouns and verbs already mentioned. These function words include the prepositions *to, with,* and *of* and the conjunction *and* (see *A Guide to Understanding,* pages 10–11).

the (OE *the*) [OE *e* has the /ā/ sound in *say*]

to (OE *tō*) [OE *ō* has the /ō/ sound in *go*]

and (OE & ME *and*) [a has the /ä/ sound in *swap*]

with (OE & ME *with*)

a (ME < OE *ān* = one)

of (OE & ME *of*)

Each of these words has retained essentially the same spelling it had in Old English or Middle English, although pronunciation has changed. (Of course, runic symbols were used to represent the letters *th* in *the* and *with* in their original forms; see *A Guide to Understanding,* pages 9–10, 20–21.) Modern English uses these words to show how the nouns and verbs relate to one another. This shows that many of the function words we use today originated in Old English.

The other words are also found in Old English:

day (OE *dæg; g* had the /y/ sound in OE)

year (OE *gear;* again with the *g*/y/ sound)

hand (OE *hand* with the /ä/ sound in swap)

knee (OE *cnēow; c*/k/, *ē* /ā/)

sing (OE *singan*)

write (OE *wrītan*)

see (OE *sēon*)

Today's English has retained a number of important nouns and verbs from Old English. Although only a relatively small number of Old English words are still used, those words that *have* survived are among the most important and most frequently used in present-day English.

Day Four

Exercise

Look at the following words taken from the paragraph on space travel used on Day One. Trace the historical development of each word.

sight -

people -

conduct -

experiments -

* artificial -

satellite -

distant -

---

*You may have to look for the word *artifice* in your dictionary in order to find the origin of *artificial.*

The first word on the list contains letters that we no longer pronounce today. Which of the earlier forms of English contained words that we now spell with "silent letters," and why are these letters still used in spelling? What other words with "silent letters" can you find in earlier exercises?

All the other words on this list originated in a single language. What is that language? Based on this paragraph, do you think it is likely that this language has contributed many other words to English? Why or why not?

Day Four

Additional Information
for the teacher

sight - ME, fr. OE *gesiht* (the *h* was sounded)

people - ME *peple,* OF *peuple* fr. L *populus*

conduct - ME *conduit* fr. L *conductus* fr. the verb *conducere,* to lead, formed from *con* (with) and *ducere* (to lead).

experiments - ME, fr. L *experimentum*

artificial - MF, fr. L *artificium* (*ars,* art + *facere,* to make)

satellite - MF, fr. L *satelles,* attendant

distant - ME, fr. L *distans* (from *distare,* to stand apart)

These words remind students of some of the most important factors in the development of English:

> Old English contained many words with letters that were originally spoken but that are now silent. Although pronunciation changed over the centuries, some of these letters were retained in later *written* English to give some evidence of how the word was originally spelled. In Day Three, the words *knee* and *write* also contain "silent letters." (See *A Guide to Understanding,* page 13.)
>
> The other words on the list originated in Latin. Remind students that Latin began to influence English in the late sixth century, about 150 years after the language of the Anglo-Saxons established the Germanic basis for English, but that the greatest influence of Latin came in the period of Early Modern English beginning around 1500. At that time many words from both Latin

and Greek were added to the English lexicon, especially words relating to science (as the paragraph on space travel shows).

Latin has contributed many words to English over the centuries. It is especially prominent in science and medicine because Latin roots and affixes can be used to create words that have precise meanings and are most useful in these areas. We will encounter many of these words as we go along.

Day Five

Exercise

Begin to write your own summary of Old English and Middle English. What are the time periods included in each period? Which people and languages from outside Britain exerted an influence on English in each period? Write down any other characteristics of the language that you can determine from the preceding exercises or from any language study you may have had.

Old English: A.D. ______ to ______
Characteristics:

Middle English: A.D. ______ to ______
Characteristics:

Day Five

Additional Information
for the teacher

After students have written their own summaries, give your own review of the week's work, referring to maps to remind students of the primary external events at the beginning of the periods of Old English (Anglo-Saxon invasions) and Middle English (Norman Conquest). Establish the time frames for the two periods and have students discuss their own summaries of the major features of the language. (Although the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* says that Germanic tribes began to settle in Britain in A.D. 449, the year 450 is usually given as the beginning of the period of Old English.)

Student summaries can include points such as these:

Old English: A.D. 450-1100

Germanic tribes (Anglo-Saxons) began to settle in Britain, bringing their language with them.

All letters were sounded in Old English.

Function words are still used today (*of, to, in*).

Nouns, adjectives, and verbs were *inflected* to show their function in the sentence.

Old English provided the foundation for today's English even though it changed over the centuries and even though many other languages influenced the English we speak now.

(Latin and Old Norse also played important roles in this period, but for now focus on the Germanic influence.)

Middle English: A.D. 1100–1500

Began shortly after the Norman Conquest of 1066, continued until about 1500.

Norman French dominated the court and legal documents, but native British people continued to speak their own language. English reemerged in the thirteenth century as the principal spoken *and* written language, but it showed a strong French influence and had lost many Old English words.

Spellings show some influence of original Old English words (*knight, sword*) but in general the trend is toward simpler spellings that minimized Old English inflections (*name* instead of *nama,* for example).

Throughout this five-day study it is important for students always to do two things: (1) consider certain facts about the language and (2) develop their own conclusions about the importance of these facts. Obviously this process will be more worthwhile after students have acquired a thorough background, but even at the beginning it can form the basic approach to word study.

Modern English

In the preceding exercises we looked at a paragraph in present-day English and saw how many OE and ME words appeared in only two sentences. In the next set of activities, students will look at language written in various types of more recent English, beginning with the first printed books in the late fifteenth century, to show how the language of the present day gradually emerged.

Begin this set of exercises with a brief review of the time frame for OE and ME. Have students look again at their guidelines and generalizations for these periods in order to set the stage for Early Modern English.

Establish that Early Modern English is the period from 1500 to 1800, and provide an overview of developments in this period (see Chapter IV of *A Guide to Understanding*). Then have students work on the exercises on the following page.

As in the preceding series, the activities for each day in the five-day series will be given first on a page marked EXERCISE that can be copied and handed out to students. Following each exercise, you will find ADDITIONAL INFORMATION that you can use to answer students' questions and guide discussion.

Day One

Exercise

The following example is from *Le Morte Darthur* (*The Death of Arthur*), written by Sir Thomas Malory in the late fifteenth century. It was published in 1485 by William Caxton, the first printer in England. This shows how English looked in the earliest books printed in the years leading into the beginning of Early Modern English:

> And there Wyth the teres ful in his eyen / And thenne he sayd Gawayne Gawayne ye haue sette me in grete sorowe / for j haue grete doubte that my true felaushyp shal neuer mete here more ageyn /

In present-day English the passage looks like this:

> And therewith the tears full in his eyes, and then he said Gawain Gawain you have set me in great sorrow, for I have great doubt that my true fellowship shall never meet here more again.

What do you notice about spelling and punctuation in the original version compared with the modern version?

List the words that are spelled differently in the two versions, with the original word followed by its present-day spelling. Of the thirty different words in the original passage, how many are spelled in ways that have changed in today's English?

there Wyth - therewith

teres -

and so on . . .

Day One

Additional Information
for the teacher

(Background for this exercise can be found on pages 37–39 of *A Guide to Understanding*.)

The passage from the original *Le Morte Darthur* reveals these characteristics:

- Spelling conventions had not been firmly established by 1500. In fact, we can sometimes find the same word spelled several different ways on a single page. (See *A Guide to Understanding*, pages 55–57.)
- Some letters such as *u* and *j* and *y* were used where we now use *v*, *I*, and *i*. (See *A Guide to Understanding*, pages 53–55.)
- Punctuation was marked by virgules (/) rather than the commas and periods we use now (see *A Guide to Understanding*, pages 36, 38).

As students list the spellings that have changed since Caxton's day, they should find 19 words that differ from current practice:

there Wyth - therewith
teres - tears
ful - full
eyen - eyes
thenne - then
sayd - said
Gawayne - Gawain
ye - you
haue - have
sette - set

grete - great
sorowe - sorrow
j - I
doubte - doubt
felaushyp - fellowship
shal - shall
neuer - never
mete - meet
ageyn - again

Day Two

Exercise

Look at the following sixteenth-century example by Richard Mulcaster (c. 1530–1611), whose *Elementarie* of 1582 was intended to deal with grammar and usage. Notice the marked changes in comparison with the Malory example of a century earlier.

> For mine own words and the terms, that I vse, theie be generallie *English*. And if anie be either an incorporate stranger, or otherwise translated, or quite coind a new, I haue shaped it as fit for the place, where I vse it, as my cunning will giue me.

Even though this passage is a bit longer than the Malory excerpt cited earlier, there are fewer words that differ from current spelling conventions. List these words and their current spellings here:

mine - my

vse -

and so on . . .

Day Two

Additional Information
for the teacher

(Background for this exercise can be found on pages 50–51 of *A Guide to Understanding.*)

There are only nine words in the Mulcaster example that are spelled differently from today's conventions:

mine - my

vse - use

theie - they

generallie - generally

anie - any

coind - coined

a new - anew

haue - have

giue - give

Three of these words use *v* for *u* and vice versa, while others involve a different form of the past tense (*coind*) or use individual words (*a new*) that have since been combined (*anew*). The use of final *-ie* where we now use *-y* is also fairly consistent. Notice the use of punctuation and of the verb *be* ("theie be generallie *English*").

Day Three

Exercise

From the early eighteenth century, look at a paragraph from a proposal *Concerning the English Language* written by Jonathan Swift in 1712. Swift is more well known as the author of *Guilliver's Travels,* in which he satirized many of the conventional beliefs of his day.

> MY Lord, I do here, in the Name of all the learned and polite Persons of the Nation, complain to your Lordship as *First Minister,* that our Language is extremely imperfect; that its daily Improvements are by no Means in Proportion to its daily Corruptions; that the Pretenders to polish and refine it, have chiefly multiplied Abuses and Absurdities; and, that in many Instances, it offends against every Part of Grammar.

Spelling presents no problems in this passage, but sentence structure is very complicated. Look for the following words in a Collegiate or Unabridged dictionary and find the language in which each one originated:

- Name
- Persons
- Nation
- Language
- imperfect
- Proportion
- Corruptions
- Pretenders
- multiplied
- Abuses
- Absurdities
- offends
- Grammar

Day Three

Additional Information

for the teacher

(Background for this exercise can be found on pages 59–64 of *A Guide to Understanding.*)

The passage by Swift expressed the view of those who wanted to prescribe certain standards of usage for the English language. Written just over a century after the Mulcaster example given for Day Two, it shows that spelling conventions had reached a level of consistency that corresponds to the practice of today. One difference, typical of the period, is in the use of lengthy sentences filled with commas and semicolons. Another difference, also typical of the period, is the use of capital letters to mark important words, usually nouns. The predominance of Latin words is obvious:

Name - Old English *nama*

Persons - Latin *persona*

Nation - Latin *natio* (race, nation), from *natus* (born)

Language - Old French *langue;* Latin *lingua*

imperfect - Latin *imperfectus* (in- + *perfectus*)

Proportion - Latin *pro-* + *portio* (portion)

Corruptions - Latin *corruptus*

Pretenders - Latin *praetendere*

multiplied - Latin *multiplicare*

Abuses - Latin *abusus*

Absurdities - Latin *absurdus* (*ab-* + *surdus* deaf, stupid)

offends - Latin *offendere*, to strike against

Grammar - Greek *grammatikē*, of letters

Make sure students understand that they must look for base forms in dictionaries and ignore inflections or suffixes (*person - persons*; *corrupt - corruptions*; etc.). Often the base form is also a different part of speech (v. *pretend*, n. *pretenders*; adj. *absurd*, n. *absurdities*).

Students can apply their knowledge by searching for more words of Anglo-Saxon, French, or Greek origin. Then have them share their findings in a group discussion.

Day Four

Exercise

The preceding examples show how the language changed from the beginning of printing in the late fifteenth century into the beginning of the eighteenth. We find that the language from about 1700 on is usually understandable today in spite of the elaborate writing style of the period.

First, look at a few words that were adapted from Latin and Greek during the period of Early Modern English. In the following examples the date of earliest use is shown in brackets (from *Random House Dictionary of the English Language,* second edition unabridged, 1987):

accumulate: L ad + *cumulare,* to heap up [1520–30]

economy: Gk *oikonomiā,* household management [1520–30]

gravity: L *gravis,* heavy [1500–10]

telescope: Gk *tēle-,* distant, + *skopos,* watcher [1610–20]

variety: L *varietās,* from *varius,* various [1525–35]

Although the word *gravity* was used in English at the beginning of the 16th century, the word *telescope* could not be expected to have gained general acceptance before the time the instrument was perfected by Galileo and Kepler in the early 17th century.

In the exercises for Day One through Day Three, see if you can find other words that entered English during this period.

Now look at the following words and see if you can to determine their language of origin and date of earliest use in English:

charisma
commodore
concoct
event
evolution
psychology

Day Four

Additional Information
for the teacher

Of the five words given at the beginning of the preceding exercise, four were introduced into English by the poet John Skelton (1460–1529). Other words introduced by Skelton are listed on page 50 of *A Guide to Understanding;* you may want to give copies of that page to your students.

The words given at the end of the preceding exercise were first used in English in years shown below in brackets:

charisma - Greek *charisma,* favor, gift; [1641] (spelled charism in English at first)

commodore - Dutch *commandeur;* from Old French *comander,* to command [1695]

concoct - Latin *concoctus;* from *concoquere,* to cook [1675]

event - Latin *eventus;* from *evenire,* to happen [1573]

evolution - Latin *evolutio,* unrolling [1622]

psychology - New Latin *psychologia,* from Greek *psychē,* mind or soul, and *-logia -logy* [1653]

For all of these words, the language of origin and date of earliest English use can be found in Webster's *Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary.* If your library has *The Barnhart Dictionary of Etymology,* edited by Robert K. Barnhart and published by The H. W. Wilson Co. in 1988, this will be most helpful as well.

Day Five

Exercises

Now we will consider the earlier stages in the development of the English language in America before the Revolution. First we will look at a complete paragraph to see how the language was used in America in the colonial period; then we will focus on words that English settlers borrowed from Native Americans.

Benjamin Franklin's explanation of how to secure "Habitations and other Buildings from Mischief by Thunder and Lightning" shows how the language was used in the middle of the eighteenth century:

> The Method is this: Provide a small Iron Rod (it may be made of the Rod-iron used by the Nailers) but of such a length, that one End being three or four Feet in the moist Ground, the other may be six or eight Feet above the highest Part of the Building. To the upper End of the Rod fasten about a Foot of Brass Wire, the Size of a common Knitting-needle, sharpened to a fine Point; the Rod may be secured to the House by a few small Staples. If the House or Barn be long, there may be a Rod and Point at each End, and a middling Wire along the Ridge from one to the other. A House thus furnished will not be damaged by Lightning, it being attracted by the Points, and passing thro the Metal into the Ground without hurting any Thing. (*Benjamin Franklin: The Autobiography and Other Writings,* edited by Kenneth Silverman; New York: Viking Penguin, 1986, p. 213)

What characteristics of this passage remind you of things you have seen in the preceding examples from earlier periods in the development of English?

Now look in your dictionary to find the language in which each of these words originated:

hickory
igloo
kayak
moccasin
raccoon

Day Five

Additional Information
for the teacher

In the example by Benjamin Franklin, students can see the frequent use of capitalized nouns (as in the passage by Jonathan Swift on Day Three), a few archaic spellings (such as *thro* for *through* and *any Thing* for *anything*), and terms such as "a middling Wire" (that is, a wire of moderate length). Aside from these features, the passage as a whole is readily intelligible in spite of frequent commas and semicolons and passages sometimes constructed in ways not often used today ("to the upper End of the Rod fasten about a Foot of Brass Wire" or "If the House or Barn be long, . . .").

For more information on the use of English in early America, see *A Guide to Understanding,* pages 71–75.

The following words entered English from Eskimo or Native American languages:

hickory - from Algonquian *pawcohiccora,* food prepared from pounded nuts

igloo - Eskimo *igdlu,* house

kayak - Eskimo *qajaq,* canoe

moccasin - Algonquian; akin to Natick *mokkusin,* shoe

raccoon - Algonquian *arahkun,* a small, gray animal with a bushy ringed tail. It lives mostly in trees and eats smaller animals, fruits, and nuts

Extended Study: The Historical Development of English

Now is the time to focus on the historical development of the language itself. By establishing a clear understanding of the historical periods and the characteristics of the language in each period, you can help students see why we follow certain conventions today and how those conventions evolved. The material in the companion monograph *A Guide to Understanding* provides the background needed for this historical study.

The following approach builds on the material already presented and allows students to review it within a chronological framework:

- Provide a survey of each period with emphasis on its external history, the characteristics of the language in that period, and some examples of its literature to show the use of language in context.
- As each period is discussed, relate its major features to the material covered in the preceding activities and stress its relevance to the language we use today. Use exercises in Part II of this book as you see fit.
- Stress the fact that knowledge of historical development explains (1) how words have been adapted from other languages and modified to fit consistent English practice, (2) why we have certain conventions in spelling and grammar today, and (3) how the language has changed and will continue to change.

Completion of this study will help students better understand the development of the English language and will also furnish them with powerful techniques for reading, writing, and comprehending the language of today. They will be able to look at the history of *individual words* in current use and see where they came from and what they originally meant, and they will also be able to follow the chronological development of English in order to understand how the *broad principles* of spelling and grammar in our present-day language developed.

After this historical survey has been presented, remind students *on a regular basis* of the material already covered and show its relevance to language study. The approach outlined below can be used as a brief guide:

1. Read a passage from literature, history, biography, or any other area. Discuss key words, especially those that may be unfamiliar, and clarify their meaning and importance to the passage. Students should do this for themselves as much as possible.
2. Treat each key word in turn, tracing it back to find its spelling and meaning in the original language.
3. Choose those key words that originated in a single language and place them in their historical context in the development of English (for example, many Latin and Greek scientific terms entered the language during the period of Early Modern English). See if there are other words in the same family that share a common semantic feature (for example, the *-logy* suffix or the root *vidēre* in words such as *vision* and *evident*).
4. Consider the state of the language in the period under consideration in item 3 and summarize the conventions of that time (for example, point out some of the unusual features of spelling and syntax in Early Modern English). This fits the words of item 3 into their broader historical framework.

5. Go back to the original passage and analyze it as a whole, fitting the key words back into place and looking at them in context and in the perspective of their history.

Applying the Study of Word History to Literature

As an example of how to use the preceding ideas and relate them to a specific literary work, we may consider a story such as *The Red Pony* by John Steinbeck. Literature anthologies in grades 7–8 often include this story, which can be approached in ways that lead logically into a consideration of the historical background of many words.

Many words that warrant further study will fit into one of the following categories:

1. **Words that must be looked up because they are unfamiliar, relate to the individual story, and must be understood before a passage can be comprehended.**

   They *curried* and brushed two horses.

   He changed the *stirrup* length.

   He carried his rifle across the *pommel.*

   Students can be told the meaning of these words or can find the meanings for themselves. They should also realize that a word such as *pommel* has a long history, coming from Latin (*pomum,* apple) through Medieval French into Middle English. In this story students will also encounter words such as *corral* and *burro* that have been borrowed from Spanish.

2. **Words that may not necessarily be unfamiliar but which would repay close study** because they may have some troublesome feature of spelling that can be worked out by consideration of their origin (*accommodate,* for example) or may contain a root or affix that is especially productive and can lead to the study of word families.

> She *interrupted,* "Jody, tonight you see you fill the wood-box clear full."

Show that the word is made up of two Latin elements, the prefix *inter-* (between, among) and the root *rupt* (from the Latin *rumpere,* to break). If you *interrupt* someone, you *break in* between the words they are speaking.

Have students see how many words they can think of that begin with *inter-* and show how the meanings "between, among" figure into these words:

> international: trade or other activities between countries
>
> interfere: to come between two people or to place an obstacle between two things
>
> internal: existing between or within other things
>
> intermediate: occurring somewhere in the middle between other things

Other words can be added, but be sure that the meaning of *inter-* is always obvious. In a word such as *interest,* for example, the current meaning has evolved so far from the Latin elements (*inter + esse,* to be) that knowledge of these elements is not particularly helpful in determining meaning (although it does clarify word structure).

Consider the Latin root *rumpere* ("to break"; past participle *ruptus*) and have students think of words containing this root or show them how these words carry the meaning *to break:*

disrupt: to break apart, throw into disorder

abrupt: breaking off suddenly without warning

erupt: to break out or through (The volcano *erupted.*)

rupture: any kind of break (The earthquake caused all the water pipes to *rupture.*)

bankrupt: having one's financial solvency or credit broken

3. **Words that have changed meaning since the story was written or that may have a number of meanings depending on context.** In some cases, a word may have a well-known meaning in everyday use but may mean something quite different in the context of the story:

It's a *cinch* that our team will win.

The horse threw the saddle off before the *cinch* could be tightened.

Earlier we considered the word *capital,* which has 17 entries in the Random House unabridged dictionary. Other words may have dozens of entries (in fact, the word *run* has 179 entries in the Random House dictionary). The idea of multiple meanings

> and changes of meaning over time should be stressed as an important element in word study.

This type of word study can be brought into play whenever an unfamiliar or interesting word appears. It will constantly remind students that they can learn more about the language and appreciate its literature more fully if they probe beneath the surface of words and find out all they can about what they mean and where they came from.

Long-Term Projects

The study of language history should make clear to students that present-day English has undergone many changes over the past 1500 years, has been influenced by a number of languages, and has developed a system of spelling and grammar that is remarkably logical and consistent, especially in view of the many factors that have influenced it over the centuries. The anomalies that do exist in the language, especially in some of its conventions of spelling and grammar, are often vestiges of earlier practices that were logical in their own time.

This is the first conclusion that students should reach: The English language today is built on structural principles that are coherent and understandable to a great extent, but sometimes these principles may seem confusing or inconsistent if the systems of grammar and spelling are viewed in the abstract simply as sets of "rules." In order to understand why English is constructed as it is today, students must look beyond the notion of language as a thing that is permanently engraved in their grammar books; they must understand how the language has evolved over time and how it continues to develop.

Current practices relating to grammar and spelling (irregular verbs and silent letters, for example) are the result of centuries of adjustment and compromise as the inflected language of the Anglo-Saxons gradually evolved into a system relying on word order as the primary organizing principle. Students must also understand that many words today are spelled much as they were in centuries past, but their pronunciation has continued to change over time.

Many of the apparent inconsistencies in today's language result from this process of development, and many present-day practices show some influence of earlier historical periods. In particular, a number of spelling conventions retain many features that show the origin and development of the word. The influence of French, Latin, and Greek is immediately evident to anyone who has made even a cursory survey of a few of the roots, affixes, and combining forms that originated in these languages and have been absorbed into the grammatical structure that has evolved from Old English.

Study of language history lends itself particularly well to an inductive approach. This should be evident in the preceding discussion: As students gain more and more knowledge of how the language evolved over the centuries, they begin to see how the language reached its present state and can view current practice in perspective. The inductive approach can be applied first in a review and summary of all that has been covered in this book. Students may be asked broad-scale questions that require them to view the entire history as a whole and relate current practices to those used in earlier periods.

Some students may be interested in undertaking projects such as those suggested below. These projects can be developed by individual students or by groups using only those materials that should be available in libraries, especially unabridged or collegiate dictionaries and encyclopedias designed for student use.

1. Consider some of the most commonly used irregular verbs (*be, see, eat, drink, take, fall, lie, shine, break, choose*) and trace their etymology. All will be found in OE, either as words originating in the Germanic languages or adapted from Latin or Greek in a few cases (*shine,* for example). Students may also compare the forms of these verbs used in present-day German to see how those forms evolved differently from English verbs even though both originated in the Germanic language spoken centuries ago.

2. For students interested in science, begin with the various disciplines in science and medicine that are identified by the suffix *-logy* (biology, zoology, meteorology, geology, seismology, physiology, pathology). Have students trace the root to see how many of them are Greek and which may have originated elsewhere. This can be expanded to a study of other words ending with *-logy* and relating to a variety of topics: anthology, morphology, terminology, ethnology, chronology, etc.

3. The Latin prefixes *ad-* and *com-* are used in a great many words. In particular, these prefixes have become assimilated by changing the last letter of the prefix to match the first letter of the following root. For example, *ad-* is used in its original form in words such as *adjust* and *admire,* but it changes to *ac-* in *acquire,* to *af-* in *affect,* to *al-* in *ally,* and to *ap-, as-,* or *at-* in words such as *approve, assist,* and *attract. Com-* (as in *commit* or *compare*) changes to

col- (*collect*) or to *con-* (*confirm, consider*) in some words.

Students may make up lists of important present-day words that begin with these prefixes in order to see how the prefixes were assimilated, what the original root meant, and how it was spelled. This can be expanded to other prefixes such as *in-* and *ex-* that lend themselves to assimilation as well. In particular, students may focus on the prefix *in-* as it is used to mean "not" or "the opposite of" something *(incorrect, improper, illogical, irreplaceable)* and contrast this with its use to mean "in" or "into" (*include, impress, illuminate*).

By undertaking such close scrutiny, students will see that a word such as *inflammable,* for example, does not mean "*not* easily ignited" and does not consist of the base and suffix *flammable* (capable of burning) preceded by a prefix meaning *not.* Instead, it is derived from the Latin verb *inflammare* (*in-* + *flamma,* flame) followed by the suffix *-able,* and the entire word means "easily and quickly ignited." In other words, it is *inflame + able,* not *in- + flammable.*

4. The mythology of Greece and Rome has provided many words that we now use in a variety of situations. We still have the *Olympics* including events such as the *marathon* and the *decathlon,* for example. The various projects in space exploration use names such as *Gemini* and *Apollo,* missiles are named *Titan* and *Atlas,* and planets are named for gods of Roman mythology (Mars, the god of war; Saturn, the god of agriculture). Furthermore, some months are either named after these gods (January - Janus; March - Mars) or use Latin roots (November, the ninth month - from *novem,* nine).

5. As a long-term project, some students might develop their own dictionary. Of course it is not necessary to account for a large number of words; such a dictionary could focus on a specific topic and include those words which students feel they need to know and understand. One approach might be to focus on important words derived from one of the languages that has influenced English most extensively: French, Latin, or Greek in particular. This would mean selecting those words most relevant to the students' interests and exploring their etymology and meaning in order to understand them more fully than might be the case if the words were just looked up in the dictionary or a glossary.

   Donald M. Ayers' ***English Words from Latin and Greek Elements*** (1986; discussed in the Annotated Bibliography below) provides a wealth of material for a study of Latin and Greek. The workbook by Dettmer and Lindgren, designed to complement Ayers' book, provides still more material. For French words, students might look at the glossary of a textbook designed to teach French to English speakers and first pick those words that have been absorbed directly into English with no change in spelling (*menu, avenue, bureau*). Then they could look for words that have changed spelling to some extent: *hôpital* - hospital; *assembler* - assemble; *musique* - music. In each case, students might check to see if the French word originated in Latin (which will often be the case) and to find out how the spelling and meaning may have changed.

   Dictionaries could also be developed according to a particular area of interest. Some words relating to science have been mentioned earlier. Other words could be added by consulting glossaries of science texts and then tracing the etymology of these words in a dictionary. In any of the arts there are many words taken into English from other languages. Even in sports, for example, students can see that *Olympic, decathlon, marathon, hurdle, pitch, run, throw,* all originated in the languages that have contributed to the development of English for the past 1500 years.

6. A perfect opportunity for using the inductive process can be found in the study of how certain sounds in Indo-European (IE) words changed in the Germanic languages (such as English) in comparison with other languages such as Latin and its descendants. For example, students may be shown a few examples such as the following:

IE Sound	Latin	English > Germanic
p	pes	foot
	pater	father
	piscis	fish
t	tres	three
	tonare	to thunder
	torrere	thirst (to dry up with heat)
k	canis	hound
	cornu	horn
	cor, cordis	heart

From these few examples, students can begin to see that certain sounds in Indo-European were retained in Latinic languages but that these sounds changed in the Germanic languages: /p/ to /f/, /t/ to /th/, and /k/ to /h/. There are other IE sounds which evolved one way in Latin and another in German, but the principle can be seen at work here. Students should be able to draw the conclusion that these changes were consistent in the cases cited above and that these changes have affected English (derived from German), setting it apart from Romance languages such as French, Italian and Spanish (derived from Latin).

These consistent changes (and others not shown here) were observed and codified in the nineteenth century by Jakob Grimm (1785–1863); they represent a most significant distinction between Germanic languages and others derived from Indo-European. These changes, sometimes identified as the First Sound Shift, have come to be known as *Grimm's Law*. Instead of simply telling students that they are going to consider Grimm's Law and then showing examples of this law, you could follow the process outlined above and then ask them to draw their own conclusions about the consistency of these changes and their relevance to English. At the end of this process they could be told that these examples illustrate Grimm's Law and that there are other sounds which exhibit similar changes in Germanic languages relative to other IE languages.

The preceding suggestions have focused on fairly narrow areas that are confined to individual words, their meaning, and the changes they have undergone throughout history. Other broad-scale topics might focus on literature and history.

7. Using dictionaries, encyclopedias, and a copy of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* in the original, students might consider a project that integrates a study of individual words, the historical context of

Chaucer's work and lifetime, and the development of English to his day. They might make a list of the words that have changed in meaning since Chaucer used them, and they might also investigate the problems Chaucer had to contend with in choosing his spellings. They may discover that Chaucer traveled widely throughout Europe and was familiar with the languages and literature of France and Italy in particular.

Students could also compare what they know about Old and Middle English and write a summary of those changes that had taken place from the time of the Anglo-Saxons up until Chaucer's day: the addition of the Latin influence beginning in 597, the impact of the Old Norse language of the Vikings with its somewhat simpler inflectional system, the loss of the literary tradition in England after the Norman Conquest, the changes made in the English language as copied by Norman scribes, and so on. By focusing on these specific features, students should come to a much deeper understanding of Chaucer's language and should have a much stronger foundation for understanding what happened from his day until ours.

8. Students should be especially interested in discovering new words added to English *in our own time.* Some of these words also draw on ancient languages, especially Greek and Latin (*astronaut, genetic engineering, superconductor*, and so on). Dictionaries often publish separate lists of new words or contain sections focusing on words added since the preceding edition. Students can see if some of these words are adapted from existing words (such as *quasar* from *quasi*-stell*ar*), are developed as acronyms (such

> as *laser* from Light Amplification by Stimulated Emission of Radiation), or are coined anew (such as *quark* or *googol*).

Projects such as these will also help students understand and retain more information than they might if they are simply provided with a historical overview or asked specific questions not related to a larger context. It will be necessary to provide a guide or outline suggesting topics on which students may focus and procedures they may follow, but after they begin such a project students should discover that they can consult several related articles in an encyclopedia, for example, or can look up roots in order to discover the underlying meaning and historical development of individual words. By following the thread as one word or article leads to others, students can pursue a true study of the language and can relate material from various sources into a summary that will deepen their own understanding.

II

Additional Exercises for Student Use

When your students consider the historical development of English, it will be helpful for them to work directly with the language in order to see how words were spelled and how sentences were constructed in the past. The following exercises can be incorporated into your study of each historical period; they are organized to focus on spelling, word structure (compounds, use of affixes), sources of words in the lexicon, grammar, and so on. You can adapt these exercises to suit the needs of your students, and you can develop others of the same kinds.

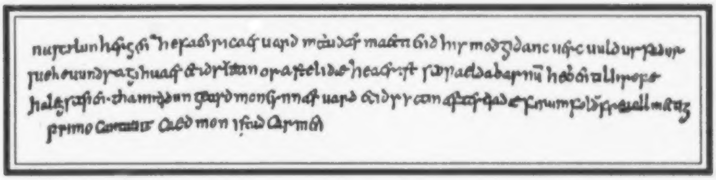
Each set of exercises brings into focus some of the most important features of the language in the period under consideration. By looking closely at the material in these exercises and by working through the problems presented, students will develop a much better understanding of how the language worked in earlier periods than they would if they only looked at examples or read modern translations.

Feel free to use these exercises in any way you choose. It will be even better if you devise others to suit your particular requirements. The historical survey given in *Word History: A Guide to Understanding the English*

Language (Smith and Reade, 1991) combined with information in the books discussed in the Annotated Bibliography in Section III below, will provide enough material for dozens of additional exercises.

For the most part, all information on meanings and etymology can be found in Webster's *Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*. This volume should be readily available and will ensure that students can find the information asked for in each exercise.

The exercises begin with a set of thirteen questions on Old English. The answers follow immediately (page 81) after all the questions on Old English have been presented. Then the set of questions on Middle English is followed by the answers to those questions. The same format is used for each historical period.



Old English: Exercises

(Answers begin on page 81)

Name ______________________________

1. SPELLING

Look at these Old English words and write their present-day spellings. Remember that the infinitive of OE verbs often ended with *-an*. Also, in OE the letter *ā* had the sound in the modern word *father*. Over the centuries, pronunciation changed so that many words spelled with *ā* in Old English now have the *long o* sound in the present-day word *grow*.

1. bedd ______________
2. etan ______________
3. scip ______________
4. glof ______________
5. stān ______________
6. mann ______________
7. helpan ______________
8. snāw ______________
9. drincan ______________
10. mūs ______________

Old English: Exercises

Name ______________________________

2. COMPOUND WORDS

Look at the individual OE words listed below and then look at the compounds formed from them. Determine the meaning of the compound words and write them with modern spellings.

Individual OE Words

boga (bow) mon (man) scīma (light, brightness)

sunna (sun) rēn (rain) flota (fleet of ships)

dæg (day) gebland (confusion, storm)

OE Compound Words

1. rēnboga ______________________
2. sunnanscīma ___________________
3. flotmon _______________________
4. snāwgebland ___________________
5. Sunnandæg ____________________

Old English: Exercises

Name ______________________________

3. SUFFIXES

Some Old English suffixes are similar to those we use today. Look at the OE suffixes and base words given below; then write the modern version of the OE words containing these suffixes. You can easily figure out some words that are close to Modern English (*cild* = *child,* for example).

OE Suffixes

had: similar to our *-hood,* meaning a condition or quality (*likelihood*) or a time or period (*boyhood*).

nes: same as our *-ness,* meaning a state, condition, or quality (*kindness, happiness*)

OE Base Words:

hefig (heavy) *modig* (proud) *cniht* (boy)

OE Words with Suffixes:

1. hefignes ____________________

2. cildhad ____________________

3. modignes ____________________

4. falsehad ____________________

5. stilnes ____________________

6. cnihthad ____________________

Old English: Exercises

Name ______________________________

4. TRANSLATION

Look at the following entries from the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* for the years 488 and 556 and use the glossaries to make your own translation of each sentence. Then compare your translations with the Modern English versions marked A and B on the next page. After each translation, indicate the year that is being discussed. The important thing is not to guess the year but to look at each sentence in the original and get some sense of how the language was used more than a thousand years ago.

Original Versions in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*

488 Hēr AEsc fēng to rīce and wæs xxiii wintra Cantwara cyning.

Glossary:

Hēr (in this year) Cantwara (people of Kent)

fēng to rīce (ascended the throne) cyning (king)

(AEsc was an Anglo-Saxon chief)

556 Hēr Cynric and Ceawlin fuhton with Brettas aet Beran byrg.

Glossary:

fuhton (fought) Brettas (the Britons)

Beran byrg (Barbury Castle)

Old English: Exercises

Translations into Modern English

A. In this year Cynric and Ceawlin fought against the Britons at Barbury castle. (Year: _____)

B. In this year AEsc ascended to the throne and was king of the people of Kent for 23 years. (Year: _____)

Old English: Exercises

Name ______________________________

5. SPELLING

We have seen that some Old English words are spelled today just as they were spelled 1500 years ago, while other spellings have changed even though we can still figure out what the words are. Look at the following list of OE words and write the modern spelling for each one.

1. sumor __________________
2. mōdor _________________
3. wyrm ___________________
4. spere __________________
5. heofon _________________
6. ende ___________________
7. frēond _________________
8. meolc __________________
9. wrītan _________________
10. wīf ___________________

Old English: Exercises

Name ______________________________

6. COMPOUND WORDS

Look at the individual OE words given below and then look at the OE compounds formed from these words. Write the present-day equivalent of each OE compound. Sometimes the modern translation can be expressed as a compound, but sometimes single words in Modern English are more accurate.

OE Words

ece (ache, pain)
brȳd (bride)
rīpan (to reap)
feld (field)
tīma (time)
hēafod (head)
bonda (master)
guma (man)
hūs (house)

OE Compound Words:

1. brȳdguma _______________
2. hēafodece _______________
3. hūsbonda _______________
4. rīptima _______________
5. feldhūs _______________

Old English: Exercises

Name ______________________________

7. SUFFIXES

Old English employed a number of prefixes and suffixes that are similar to those we use today. Look at the meaning of the three OE suffixes below and then look at the individual OE words that follow. Write the modern version of the OE words containing these suffixes. In some cases the base words can be figured out because they are close to Modern English.

OE Suffixes:

-ere: same as our suffix *-er* used to indicate agent (*runner, player, follower*)

-nes: same as our *-ness*, meaning *condition* or *quality*

-lice: similar to our *-ly,* the adverb suffix meaning *in a specified manner*

Some OE Words:

dēop (deep)

nāht (nothing)

smylte (mild)

rǣdan (to read)

OE Words with Suffixes:

1. dēoplīce __________
2. rǣdere __________
3. openlīce __________
4. smyltnes __________
5. fullīce __________
6. wrītere __________
7. nāhtnes __________

Old English: Exercises

Name ______________________________

8. TRANSLATION

Look at the following entries from the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* for the years 473, 501, 514, and then use the Glossary (which follows the three entries) to translate each sentence. (You may want to use a separate sheet of paper for this.) Then compare your translations with those given on the next page after the Glossary. Following each modern translation, indicate the year that is discussed.

Entries in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle:

473 Hēr Hengest and AEsc gefuhton with Wealas, and genamon unarimedlicu herereaf; and tha Wealas flugon tha Engle swa swa fyr.

501 Hēr comon Port on Bretene, and his twegen suna Bieda and Maegla, mid twæm scipum, on thære stowe the is gecweden Portes-mutha.

514 Hēr comon West-seaxe in Bretene, mid thrim scipum, in that stowe the is gecweden Cerdicesora; and Stuf and Wihtgar fuhton with Brettas and hie gefliemdon.

Glossary:

Bretene (Britain)

Engle (English: originally the Angli from northern Germany)

flugon (fled)

fuhton (fought)

Old English: Exercises

gecweden (called, named)

gefliemdon (put to flight)

gefuhton (fought)

genamon (seized)

Hengest (one of the leaders of the Anglo-Saxon tribes that occupied Britain in the fifth century; AEsc was his son)

hererēaf (plunder, spoils of war)

hie (they, them)

stowe (place)

swa swa (just as, as if)

thrim (three)

twæm, twegen (two)

unarimedlicu (countless, innumerable)

Wealas (Welsh) [*wealh* literally meant *foreigner, slave*]

Translations into Present-day English:

A. In this year Port came to Britain, and his two sons Bieda and Maegla, with two ships, in the place called Portsmouth. (Year: ______)

B. The West-Saxons came into Britain with three ships at the place called Cerdicesora; and Stuf and Wihtgar fought with the Britons and put them to flight. (Year: ______)

C. Hengest and Aesc fought the Welsh, and seized countless spoils of war; and the Welsh fled the English as from fire. (Year: ______)

Old English: Exercises

Name ______________________________

9. SPELLING

Write the modern spelling for each of the following Old English words:

1. fēower ______________________
2. fīf __________________________
3. seofon ______________________
4. tīen ________________________
5. twentig ______________________
6. fiftig ________________________
7. fēowertīene __________________
8. seofontīene __________________
9. wringan ____________________
10. sunne ______________________

Old English: Exercises

Name ______________________________

10. SUFFIXES

Look at the OE suffixes and base words given below. Then write the modern spelling of the OE words that end with these suffixes.

OE Suffixes:

-end is used to change a verb into a noun showing agent: *buan* (to dwell), *buend* (dweller)

-ung and sometimes *-ing* are used just as we use *-ing* today to form a noun from a verb: *trymman* (to strengthen), *trymming* (strengthening, encouragement)

OE Base Words:

gewealdan (to rule)

clipian (to call, summon)

sweotolian (to show, reveal)

fēran (to go, travel)

cīepan (to sell, trade)

OE Words with Suffixes:

fērend __________________

clipung __________________

wealdend __________________

sweotolung __________________

cīepan __________________

Old English: Exercises

Name ______________________________

11. INFLECTIONS

Four nouns or adjective-noun pairs are given below, showing how they would be inflected to indicate the Nominative Case (subject) and the Accusative (direct object) or Dative Cases (indirect object) in Old English. Look at the sentences in Modern English and write the correct Old English words in each case to correspond to the underlined words.

Old English		Modern English
fersc fisc (Nom.)	ferscne fisc (Acc.)	fresh fish
menn (Nom.)	mannum (Dat.)	men
eald trēow (Nom.)	ealdne trēow (Acc.)	old tree
gōd wine (Nom.)	gōdum wine (Dat.)	good friend

Sentences in Modern English:

1. The men are working nearby. ______________
2. Give the men their coats. ________________
3. Fresh fish is hard to find. __________ _______
4. I bought fresh fish at the market. ____ _______
5. My good friend is visiting me. _______ _______
6. I gave my good friend a gift. ________ _______
7. The old tree is not far from here. ____ _______
8. Now I can see the old tree. _________ _______

Old English: Exercises

Name ______________________________

12. SPELLING

Give the modern spelling for the following Old English words. Even though some of these words look very much like we spell them today, their pronunciation differed considerably in many cases.

1. scrincan _________
2. nēah ____________
3. healf ____________
4. scadu ___________
5. hwīt _____________
6. dēad ____________
7. huntian __________
8. scīnan ___________
9. eall ______________
10. flyht _____________
11. sweoster _________

Old English: Exercises

Name ______________________________

13. PREFIXES

A number of Old English prefixes are similar to those we use today:

be- means *about* or *around* as used in the modern word *besiege*, which means to place armed forces all around the city or fort under attack.

for- often conveys a sense of loss or destruction, as we see in the words *forbode* (or *forebode*) and *forsake* that have come down to us from Old English. This prefix can also imply the opposite of the meaning of the base word: *lecgan* means to *arrange* or *put before; forlecgan* means to *cover up.*

un- establishes the negative of the base word, just as it it does in Modern English (*lucky* - *unlucky*).

Look at the Old English words given here:

gesǣlig: happy
mihtig: mighty
lūcan: to lock
dōn: to do, make
lǣtan: to leave
sēon: to see
settan: to place, occupy

Now look at the words on the next page.

Old English: Exercises

Indicate by letter the Modern English word that most closely conveys the meaning of each Old English word:

OLD ENGLISH	**MODERN ENGLISH**
1. unlūcan ______	a. to surround
2. fordōn ______	b. to abandon
3. besēon ______	c. unhappy
4. unmihtig ______	d. to destroy (make destruction)
5. forlǣtan ______	e. to look around
6. besettan ______	f. weak, not mighty
7. ungesǣlig ______	g. to unlock

Old English: Answers

1. SPELLING

1. bed
2. to eat
3. ship
4. glove
4. glove
5. stone
6. man
7. to help
8. snow
9. to drink
10. mouse

Students can see the use of doubled consonants at the end of short-vowel words; this changed to the CVC principle (Consonant-Vowel-Consonant) centuries later. Verbs were inflected to show the infinitive (*-an* in this case); we now use *to* before the verb and drop the inflection. The *sc* pattern had the /sh/ sound in OE and other consonants and vowel sounds have changed in modern spellings of words such as *glof* and *snāw*.

2. COMPOUND WORDS

1. rainbow
2. sunshine
3. sailor (literally "fleet-man")
4. snowstorm
5. Sunday

Point out that some words in OE had more than one spelling, just as OE had a number of words for the same thing in some cases. They should not be surprised to find *man* spelled *mann* in one place and *mon* in another. Variations in spelling often result from internal inflections (*mann, menn*); we still use these internal inflections to form the plural of some nouns (*mouse* and *mice*; *goose* and *geese*).

Old English: Answers

3. SUFFIXES

1. heaviness, weight
2. childhood
3. pride (literally "proudness")
4. falsehood
5. stillness, quiet
6. boyhood, youth

4. TRANSLATION: A - 556; B - 488

Some individual words and short phrases in OE may need to be translated as longer phrases: For example, *xxiii wintra* means *for 23 winters* and *Cantwara* means *the people of Kent.*

5. SPELLING

1. summer
2. mother
3. worm
4. spear
5. heaven, sky
6. end, conclusion
7. friend
8. milk
9. to write
10. wife, woman

Old English: Answers

6. COMPOUND WORDS

1. bridegroom (literally "bride-man")
2. headache
3. house-master (source of the word *husband*)
4. harvest (literally "reaping-time")
5. tent (literally "field-house")

If students give literal answers such as *reaping-time* or *field-house* for the last two items, ask them to think of other words used more commonly today and lead them toward *harvest* and *tent.*

7. SUFFIXES

1. deeply
2. reader
3. openly
4. mildness
5. fully
6. writer
7. worthlessness (nothingness)

8. TRANSLATION: A - 501 B - 514 C - 473

Students can first develop their own translations as far as possible. Then they can see a complete translation and gain a better sense of the character of OE and the ways in which it differs from today's language. As always, the point is not for students to "get the answer" but to use these exercises to apply what they have learned about Old English.

Old English: Answers

9. SPELLING

1. four
2. five
3. seven
4. ten
5. twenty
6. fifty
7. fourteen
8. seventeen
9. to wring
10. sun

10. SUFFIXES

1. traveler
2. calling
3. ruler
4. a sign (a "showing")
5. trader, seller

11. INFLECTIONS

1. menn
2. mannum
3. fersc fisc
4. ferscne fisc
5. gōd wine
6. gōdum wine
7. eald trēow
8. ealdne trēow

12. SPELLING

1. to shrink
2. near
3. half
4. shadow
5. white
6. dead
7. to hunt
8. to shine
9. all
10. flight
11. sister

13. PREFIXES

1. g
2. d
3. e
4. f
5. b
6. a
7. c

Middle English: Exercises
(Answers begin on page 99)

Name ______________________________

1. SPELLING

Look at the following words as spelled in Old English (OE) and in Middle English (ME) and then write the Modern English (ModE) spelling. Remember that infinitives in OE and ME often ended with *-an* or *-en*.

	OE	ME	ModE
1.	dohtor	doughter	
2.	findan	finden	
3.	leornian	lernen	
4.	nefa	nevew	
5.	cēpan	kepen	
6.	heorte	herte	

Middle English: Exercises

Name ______________________________

2. WORDS USED BY CHAUCER

Look at the following words used by Chaucer and write their modern spellings.

1. battailles ____________________
2. biginne ____________________
3. bisyde ____________________
4. coude ____________________
5. foughten ____________________
6. in stede ____________________
7. sesoun ____________________
8. tyme ____________________

Middle English: Exercises

Name ______________________________

3. WORDS FROM THE FRENCH LANGUAGE

During the period of Middle English the following French words were absorbed into English with only slight changes in spelling, although pronunciation often differed noticeably. Write the present-day English spelling for each French word.

FRENCH	ENGLISH
1. actif	________________
2. musique	________________
3. papier	________________
4. sujet	________________
5. jugement	________________
6. personne	________________

Middle English: Exercises

Name ______________________________

4. VOCABULARY

The French words listed below have changed spelling to varying degrees in their English forms. Write the English words and explain briefly what changes have been made in spelling and treatment of inflections (either altered or eliminated). Remember that many French verbs end with *-er* or *-re* in the infinitive.

FRENCH	ENGLISH	CHANGES
1. defendre	____________	____________
2. capitaine	____________	____________
3. pardonner	____________	____________
4. bouton	____________	____________
5. grammaire	____________	____________
6. moutarde	____________	____________

Middle English: Exercises

Name ______________________________

5. SPELLING

Write these ME words as they would be spelled today.

	ME	ModE
1.	signe	___________
2.	peyne	___________
3.	nyce	___________
4.	honestē	___________
5.	preyere	___________
6.	sholde	___________
7.	pitee	___________
8.	swete	___________
9.	pleynte	___________
10.	wighte	___________

Middle English: Exercises

Name ______________________________

6. WORDS FROM THE FRENCH LANGUAGE

Write the Modern English spellings for these French words. Remember that many French verbs end with *-er* or *-re* in the infinitive.

FRENCH	MODERN ENGLISH
1. soudain	
2. commander	
3. doute	
4. admettre	
5. curieux	
6. temporaire	
7. separer	
8. nombre	

Middle English: Exercises

Name ______________________________

7. VOCABULARY

Latin words are given below in their original form, followed by French and Middle English words derived from them. Look at the changes that took place as each word moved from Latin through the other languages into Modern English; then write the present-day spelling for each word.

	LATIN	FRENCH/ME	ENGLISH
1.	auctoritas	autorite	____________________
2.	repetere	repeter	____________________
3.	opprimere	oppresser	____________________
4.	probare	prouver	____________________
5.	thesaurus	tresor	____________________
6.	gentilis	gentil	____________________
7.	sufficere	sufficen	____________________
8.	respublica	republique	____________________

Middle English: Exercises

Name ______________________________

8. THE LANGUAGE OF CHAUCER

The following excerpt is taken from the Prologue to Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales,* written in the 1390s. This passage gives a description of the *Frankeleyn* (Franklin), the country gentleman who devoted himself to good food in great quantity. As you read it, be sure to sound out the words, remembering that all letters are spoken (including the final *e* with the schwa sound in *drinke* and *thinke,* for example): This will help give the meaning of some words. Then use the glossary to write your own Modern English version.

With-oute bake mete was never his hous,

Of fish and flesh, and that so plentevous,

It snewed in his hous of mete and drinke,

Of alle deyntees that men coude thinke.

After the sondry sesons of the yeer,

So chaunged he his mete and his soper.

GLOSSARY (words in parentheses are only for information)

deyntees: dainties (delicacies)

plentevous: plenteous (plentiful)

sondry: sundry (various)

Now write your own version.

Middle English: Exercises

Name ______________________________

9. WORDS FROM MALORY'S *LE MORTE DARTHUR*

Write modern spellings of the following words taken from Sir Thomas Malory's version of the King Arthur legend, written in the fifteenth century (c. 1460–70).

1. myne ______________
2. aske ______________
3. hyghe ______________
4. thenne ______________
5. brodor ______________
6. ageyne ______________
7. nothynge ______________
8. youreselff ______________
9. seyde ______________
10. batayle ______________

Middle English: Exercises

Name ______________________________

10. WORDS FROM THE FRENCH LANGUAGE

Give the Modern English spelling for the French words listed below. (Remember that French infinitives often end with *-er* and *re*).

FRENCH	ENGLISH
1. progressif	______________
2. ordinaire	______________
3. furieux	______________
4. cultiver	______________
5. attentif	______________
6. entrer	______________
7. difficile	______________
8. curieux	______________

Middle English: Exercises

Name ______________________________

11. TRACING THE ETYMOLOGY OF WORDS

The following Modern English words originally entered Middle English by way of French. Look in a collegiate or unabridged dictionary to trace each word back to its source, noting the meaning of the word in its original language. In some cases a word may be spelled the same in two or more languages, but if there are any differences in the spelling of any of the earlier forms then these should be noted. (For example, the English word *observe* is from ME *observen,* which was spelled *observer* in French; the original Latin word *observare* meant "to guard, watch").

When English words involve roots and affixes, deal with each element individually in order to find the source of each component and to see how the meaning of the English word grows logically from these source elements. In addition to the abbreviations ME (Middle English) and L (Latin), you will use OF (Old French, 9th–13th centuries) and MF (Middle French, 14th–16th centuries).

1. miracle:
2. leisure:
3. assembly:
4. ornament:
5. alliance:
6. tournament:

Middle English: Exercises

Name ______________________________

12. INTERPRETING THE WORDS OF CAXTON

The following passage was written by William Caxton in the prologue to his second edition of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, which Caxton published about 1484. Read the original and then use the glossary to rewrite the passage using present-day English. In this statement, Caxton is speaking of Chaucer himself:

> Of whom he made many bokes and treatyces of many a noble historye as wel in metre as in ryme and prose; and them so craftyly made that he comprehended hys maters in short, quyck and hye sentences, . . .

GLOSSARY (material in parentheses is just for information)

craftyly - craftily (skillfully)

hye - noble, lofty

metre - meter (systematically arranged and measured rhythm in verse)

quyck - quick, lively, vital (running, flowing)

treatyces - treatises (systematic arguments in writing)

Your version in modern English:

Middle English: Exercises

Name ______________________________

13. SPELLING

Look at the following Middle English words and write their modern English spellings (ModE). Remember that infinitives were still inflected in ME, usually ending with *-en*.

	ME	ModE
1.	wandren	__________________
2.	treuthe	__________________
3.	prysoun	__________________
4.	gruche (vb.)	__________________
5.	sodeynly	__________________
6.	frenchype	__________________
7.	chaungen	__________________
8.	reyther	__________________
9.	housbond	__________________
10.	my-selven	__________________

Middle English: English

Name ______________________________

14. WORDS FROM FRENCH AND LATIN

Look at the following Latin words and the French words derived from them; then write the modern English spelling. Use a dictionary to find the original meaning of the Latin words *contra, augere* (Eng. *augur*), *dexter,* and *tempus.*

	LATIN	FRENCH	ENGLISH
1.	contra	contraire	________________
2.	inaugurare	inaugurer	________________
3.	dexteritas	dexterite	________________
4.	cultivare	cultiver	________________
5.	tempus	temporaire	________________
6.	computare	compter	________________

Middle English: Answers

1. SPELLING

1. daughter
2. to find
3. to learn
4. nephew
5. to keep
6. heart

2. WORDS USED BY CHAUCER

1. battles
2. begin
3. beside
4. could
5. fought
6. instead
7. season
8. time

Point out that *could* was originally spelled *cūthe* in OE and changed to *coude* in ME before acquiring its present spelling. Apparently the only reason it acquired a silent *l* was to make it match the graphemic pattern of *would* and *should,* words that have good reason to contain an *l* because of their etymology: *Should* was spelled *scheolde* in OE and *shole* in ME, while *would* was spelled *wolde* in both OE and ME. With these two words the *l* was originally sounded in OE, but in *could* the letter *l* is part of the spelling convention that has evolved in order to establish a consistent pattern for these three words.

3. WORDS FROM THE FRENCH LANGUAGE

1. active
2. music
3. paper
4. judgment (judgement)
5. person

Middle English: Answers

4. VOCABULARY

1. to defend (verb suffix *-re* dropped)
2. captain (second syllable *-i-* dropped)
3. to pardon (verb suffix *-er* dropped)
4. button (vowel sound changed to /u/, doubled medial consonant added to mark short vowel in first syllable
5. grammar (second syllable changed to *-mar,* unstressed)
6. mustard (vowel changed to /u/, letter *s* added)

5. SPELLING

1. sign
2. pain
3. nice
4. honesty
5. prayer
6. should
7. pity
8. sweet
9. plenty
10. weight

For *should,* remind students that the *l* was sounded in ME *sholde,* as it was in *wolde* (would). In Exercise 2 above we pointed out that the letter *l* was added in *could* to make the graphemic pattern consistent in all three words.

Middle English: Answers

6. WORDS FROM THE FRENCH LANGUAGE

1. sudden
2. to command
3. doubt
4. to admit
5. curious
6. temporary
7. to separate
8. number

Make sure students realize that the French word *commander* is a verb and is not the same as the English noun *commander*. Also point out that the letter *b* was added to the word *doubt* when spellings were being codified in the period of Early Modern English because that letter formed a part of the original Latin verb *dubitare,* meaning "to hesitate or be uncertain." The *b* does give a hint of the etymology of the word even though the letter is not spoken.

7. VOCABULARY

1. authority
2. to repeat
3. to oppress
4. to prove
5. treasure
6. gentle
7. to suffice
8. republic

You may want to have students discuss the changes they find: the removal of the *c* and the change from *t* to *th* in *authority;* the change from /m/ to /s/ in *oppress;* and so on. Also point out that a *thesaurus* is not only a dictionary of synonyms and antonyms or any encyclopedia or other comprehensive reference book; it can literally mean a storehouse or "treasure" of any sort.

Middle English: Answers

8. THE LANGUAGE OF CHAUCER

A literal version should look something like this:

Without bake meat was never his house,
Of fish and flesh, and that so plenteous
It snowed in his house of meat and drink,
Of all dainties that men could think.
After the sundry seasons of the year,
So changed he his meat and his supper.

The more free version given below is intended to convey the spirit of the poem rather than to match the original word for word. You may want to read this to students or give them a photocopy so they can see that it matches current English usage and is much more lively and interesting than is a literal version. It also retains the pattern of rhymed couplets used by Chaucer, although the rhymed sound at the end of the first two lines is different from that in the original.

His house was never short of bake-meat pies,
Of fish and flesh, and these in such supplies
It positively snowed with meat and drink
And all the dainties that a man could think.
According to the seasons of the year
Changes of dish were ordered to appear.

(Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales,* translated by Nevill Coghill. New York: Viking/Penguin, 1951, p. 28)

Middle English: Answers

9. WORDS FROM MALORY'S *LE MORTE DARTHUR*

1. mine
2. ask
3. high
4. then
5. brother
6. again
7. nothing
8. yourself
9. said
10. battle

10. WORDS FROM THE FRENCH LANGUAGE

1. progressive
2. ordinary
3. furious
4. to cultivate
5. attentive
6. to come in, to enter
7. difficult
8. curious

Students should notice the consistent correspondences between French and English word endings: *-if* to *-ive; -eux* to *ous; -aire* to *-ary*.

Middle English: Answers

11. TRACING THE ETYMOLOGY OF WORDS

1. miracle: ME from OF, from L *miraculum*
2. leisure: ME *leisir* from MF, from L *licēre* (to be permitted)
3. assembly: ME *assemblee,* from OF *assembler* The verb *assemble* comes originally from L *assimulare.*
4. ornament: ME, from OF *ornement,* from L *ornamentum* (equipment, furniture)
5. alliance: It is necessary to consult the verb *ally,* ME *allien* from OF *alier,* from L *alligare* (to bind).
6. tournament: ME *tornement,* from OF *torneiement*

For *assembly,* make sure that students look back at the word *assemble* to see that the French verb *assembler* probably developed from the Latin verb *assimulare,* which was itself composed of the prefix *ad-* and the adverb *simul* (together, at the same time). Also, for *alliance* students should look at the word *ally* and see that the Old French word *alier* was itself derived from the Latin verb *alligare,* consisting of the prefix *ad-* and the root *ligare* (to bind). It is important to stress the need for students always to look for the base word when considering the etymology of a word with a prefix or suffix.

Although students will not remember all the details unearthed in this search for the etymology of these six words, they can benefit from an exercise such as this because they are required to trace each word through its various permutations in ME or OF back to the Latin source in most cases. They will see that some words have retained their spelling since ME (*ornament*) or OF (*miracle*) and they will also see how the Latin words were altered in OF or MF before they entered English. This provides clear evidence of the *process* of language evolution through these languages over the centuries.

12. INTERPRETING THE WORDS OF CAXTON

With modern spellings the passage would look like this:

> Of whom he made many books and treatises of many a noble history as well in meter as in rhyme and prose; and them so skillfully made that he comprehended his matters in short, lively and noble sentences.

13. SPELLING

1. to wander
2. truth
3. prison
4. to grouch, complain
5. suddenly
6. friendship
7. to change
8. rather
9. husband
10. myself

Middle English: Answers

14. WORDS FROM FRENCH AND LATIN

1. contrary
2. to inaugurate
3. dexterity
4. to cultivate
5. temporary
6. to count, compute

Meaning of Latin words:

contra: against, opposite

augēre: to make grow, to increase

dexter: right

tempus: time

Early Modern English: Exercises
(Answers begin on page 125)

Name ______________________________

1. SPELLING

Look at these words taken from sixteenth-century literature and write their modern spellings.

1. allredie ______________________
2. bene ______________________
3. birdes ______________________
4. continew ____________________
5. her selfe ____________________
6. powre ______________________
7. starre ______________________
8. suddain ______________________
9. theyre ______________________
10. effraide ______________________

Early Modern English: Exercises

Name ______________________________

2. ELIZABETHAN ENGLISH

Look at the sentences below that use spellings found in the language of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, the age of Queen Elizabeth I (1533–1603). Then rewrite these sentences with modern spellings.

1. The clowds will soone passe and the sunne will be shyning.

____.

2. The Queene her selfe doth loue musicke.

____

3. This knight hath suffred deepe woundes in battel.

____

4. "They cannot finde that path, which first was showne,
   But wander too and fro in waies unknowne, . . ."

"____,

____, . . ."

Early Modern English: Exercises

Name ______________________________

3. SYNONYMS

The following exercise deals with words of similar meaning that originated in different languages. English words in the first column derive from Old English, while English words in the second column originated in French or Latin. In the space following English word in the first column, indicate by letter the word derived from French or Latin that means much the same thing.

ENGLISH	**ENGLISH < FRENCH or LATIN**
1. folk _______	a. action (F *action;* L *āctiōnem*)
2. help _______	b. cottage (F *cotage*)
3. strength ___	c. people (F *peuple;* L *populus*)
4. house _____	d. demand (F *demander;* L *demandare*)
5. deed ______	e. aid (F *aider;* L *adjuvare*)
6. ask _______	f. fortitude (L *fortitudo*)

Early Modern English: Exercises

Name ______________________________

4. LATIN WORDS

Many Latin words had entered the English language by the seventeenth century, sometimes directly, sometimes by way of French. Look at each definition and at the Latin elements that make up the English words defined below. Then write the modern spelling for each English word derived from these Latin (L) elements.

1. DEFINITION: "To be made up or composed"

from L *com-*, *con-* (with) + *sistere* (to take a stand)

MODERN ENGLISH WORD: ________________

2. DEFINITION: "To investigate or study; to travel for discovery."

from L *ex-* (out of, from) + *plorare* (to cry out)

MODERN ENGLISH WORD: ________________

3. DEFINITION: "To express grief or discontent."

from L *com-* (with) + *plangere* (to lament)

MODERN ENGLISH WORD: ________________

4. DEFINITION: "Lack of sufficent regard or esteem."

from L *dis-* (apart, not, opposite of) + *respicere* (to look back, regard)

MODERN ENGLISH WORD: ________________

Early Modern English: Exercises

Name ______________________________

5. SPELLING

Look at the words below, taken from writings of sixteenth-century authors. Write the modern spelling for each word.

1. certeine ______________________
2. compeld ______________________
3. deceipt ______________________
4. inchaunted ______________________
5. seuerall ______________________
6. shadie ______________________
7. slombring ______________________
8. strecht ______________________
9. winne ______________________

Early Modern English: Exercises

Name ______________________________

6. ELIZABETHAN ENGLISH

In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries—the time of Queen Elizabeth I and William Shakespeare—the treatment of some letters was different from that found today. We have seen that the letter *u* served for both the vowel *u* and the consonant *v*, and the letter *i* served for the vowel *i* and the consonant *j*. The final *silent e* was not always used to mark long-vowel patterns such as *hope;* sometimes it was retained as a vestige of Old English, often in places in which we would not use it today.

Read the following sentences written in the style of the late sixteenth century; then rewrite them with spellings we use today.

1. I haue told you of the kinges loue for musike.

   ____.

2. Folowe your owne aduis and neuer question it.

   ____.

3. We haue bine broght up to loue musicke.

   ____.

4. "A shrilling trompett sownded from on hye,
   And unto battaill bad them selves addresse: . . ."

   ____

   ____. . . ."

Early Modern English: Exercises

Name ______________________________

7. GREEK WORDS IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

We have already pointed out that the spelling of many Greek words changed when they were taken into the Latin language. For example, the change from Greek *k* to Latin *c* was seen in the word *circle* (Latin *circus* < Greek *kyrkos* meaning *ring*). Also, Greek words originally spelled with *ai* and *oi* are often spelled with *e* in English, and Greek words spelled with *ou* are often spelled with *u*.

Look at each Greek word below and write its modern English spelling. Notice that the Greek words often contain more syllables than their English equivalents.

GREEK	ENGLISH
1. mousikē	________________
2. sphaira	________________
3. politika	________________
4. oikonomia	________________
5. kōnos	________________
6. phainomenon	________________

Early Modern English: Exercises

Name ______________________________

8. DOUBLETS

The following exercise deals with words that originated in Latin and entered English at different times and by different routes, sometimes directly from Latin and sometimes by way of French. This means that we sometimes have two words in English that evolved from the same Latin root. Such words are called *doublets.*

Look at each Latin word below and then indicate the letter for the word in Column I and the word in Column II that developed from that source. Words in Column I entered English by way of French while those in column II are closer to the Latin original.

LATIN	I	II
1. abbreviare ___, ___	a. dainty	f. piety
2. rationalis ___, ___	b. frail	g. rational
3. pietas ___, ___	c. abridge	h. dignity
4. fragilis ___, ___	d. pity	i. fragile
5. dignitas ___, ___	e. reasonable	j. abbreviate

Early Modern English: Exercises

Name ______________________________

9. CHANGES IN THE MEANING OF WORDS

The word *semantics* comes from the Greek *sēmantikos* (from *sēmainein*, to mean or signify) and refers to the study of *meaning* in language, especially to the changes in meaning that words may undergo as a language develops. We have seen that Chaucer used some words that appear familiar to us today but that had different meanings in his day; the same is true of words used in the time of Shakespeare.

The words below are followed by definitions existing around the year 1500. Find these words in the dictionary and write their current meaning in order to see what changes have occurred. Also check the etymology of each word to find the language in which it originated.

1. *adventure*: chance, luck, fortune, accident

   Current meaning: ______________________________

2. *read*: to think, suppose, estimate, teach

   Current meaning: ______________________________

3. *courage*: heart, mind, disposition

   Current meaning: ______________________________

4. *prowl*: to plunder, rob, get by cheating

   Current meaning: ______________________________

5. *await:* to contrive, plot, lie in hiding

   Current meaning: ______________________________

Early Modern English: Exercises

Name ______________________________

10. LATIN PREFIXES AND ROOTS

The Latin prefix *ad-* means "to, toward" and is used in a great many words that have been taken into the English language. This prefix was retained in its original form in words whose roots began with consonants that could be pronounced clearly after *ad-* (*adhere, adjust, admire, advise,* for example) but was assimilated into the root when used before other consonants in order to assist in pronunciation. These assimilated forms are *ac-, af-, ag-, al-, ap-, as-,* and *at-* as found in words such as *account, afford, aggression, allow, approve, assume,* and *attempt.*

Look up the following words in the dictionary to determine the Latin *root* and its meaning and to see how spelling has been adjusted to match the prefix with the consonant at the beginning of each root.

1. accuse: *ad-* + ________________________
2. affect: *ad-* + ________________________
3. allocate: *ad-* + ________________________
4. appreciate: *ad-* + ____________________
5. assume: *ad-* + ________________________
6. attract: *ad-* + ________________________

Early Modern English: Exercises

Name ______________________________

11. GREEK WORDS IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Look at the Greek word elements and at the definitions of English words given below. Then write the English word that fits each definition and is made up of the Greek prefixes and roots given in the list.

GREEK PREFIXES AND ROOTS

aut- auto- (self, same, one)

dia- (through, across)

gram, -graph (from *graphien*, to write)

metron (measure)

peri- (around, near)

ENGLISH WORDS DEFINED

1. The boundary of a closed plane figure; the outer limits (noun): ____________________
2. The length of a straight line through the center of a figure such as a circle (noun): ________________
3. Marked by writing or drawing; sharply outlined or delineated (adj.): _________
4. Something written or made with one's own hand; a person's handwritten signature (noun) ____________
5. A design that explains rather than represents, especially a drawing that shows relationships and arrangements (noun): ____________________

Early Modern English: Exercises

Name ______________________________

12. CHANGES IN GRAMMAR

Grammatical principles accepted as the norm today were not clearly established until people began to consider them seriously in the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries. For example, Shakespeare could write "This was the most unkindest cut of all" in *Julius Caesar,* using two superlatives (*most* and *unkindest*) for greater emphasis; today we would use only one.

A few examples of such differences in grammar in Early Modern English are shown on the next page; all are taken from Shakespeare and other writers of the period. Rewrite these passages using grammatical principles and spellings of the present day, and explain what changes have been made. The underlined words are those primarily involved in the change. Keep in mind that these grammatical structures were not "wrong" in their day; they are simply different from the ones that came to be established in later centuries.

1. The mistress which I serue . . .

   ____

2. There goes thou the most perfectst man

   That euer England bred a Gentleman.

   ____

   ____

3. The first of gold, who this inscription beares . . .

   ____

4. But stay, here comes the Gardiners . . .

   ____

5. I cannot goe no further . . .

   ____

Early Modern English: Exercises

Name ______________________________

13. CHANGES IN MEANING

When the following words were used in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, their meanings differed from those we employ today. In some cases, usage in Early Modern English stressed certain elements of meaning that are now less often used; today we may tend to emphasize other characteristics of a certain word. Look at each word and its earlier definition; then write the modern definition as found in a collegiate or unabridged dictionary. When a word has retained its earlier meanings but also carries additional meanings or has shifted emphasis, indicate those additional characteristics. Also show the derivation of each word.

1. *brave:* splendid, excellent, finely dressed.

   Present meaning: ______________________________

   Derivation: ______________________________

2. *wit:* the mind; practical talent or mechanical ability; good judgment.

   Present meaning: ______________________________

   Derivation: ______________________________

Early Modern English: Exercises

3. *secure:* rash, overconfident.

Present meaning: ______________________________

Derivation: ______________________________

4. *conceit:* idea, conception, fanciful notion.

Present meaning: ______________________________

Derivation: ______________________________

5. *mediocrity:* moderation, temperance.

Present meaning: ______________________________

Derivation: ______________________________

Early Modern English: Exercises

Name ______________________________

14. WORDS FROM THE LATIN LANGUAGE

The words listed below are made up of Latin prefixes and roots. After each word, write its present definition as given in a dictionary and then show the Latin prefix and root contained in the word. Also give the meaning of each prefix and root.

1. *abduct:* ______________________________

Latin prefix: ______________________________

Latin root: ______________________________

2. *succumb:* ______________________________

Latin prefix: ______________________________

Latin root: ______________________________

3. *collect:* ______________________________

Latin prefix: ______________________________

Latin root: ______________________________

4. *effect:* noun ______________________

verb ______________________

Latin prefix: ______________________

Latin root: ______________________

5. *offer:* ______________________

Latin prefix: ______________________

Latin root: ______________________

Early Modern English: Exercises

Name ______________________________

15. WORDS FROM THE GREEK LANGUAGE

The following words entered the English language from Greek. Look up each word in a dictionary and write its present definition. Then look back at the Greek word element and find its definition in the dictionary as well.

1. *glossary:* ____________________________________

Gr. *gloss-, glosso-:*____________________________

2. *apology:* _____________________________________

Gr. l*og-, logo-:* ______________________________

3. *agonize:* _____________________________________

Gr. *agon:* ______________________________________

4. *tactical:*_____________________________________

Gr.*-tactic* (*taktikos*): __________________________

Early Modern English: Answers

1. SPELLING

1. already
2. been
3. birds
4. continue
5. herself
6. power
7. star
8. sudden
9. their
10. afraid

2. ELIZABETHAN ENGLISH

1. The clouds will soon pass and the sun will be shining.
2. The Queen herself does love music (or just "loves music").
3. This knight has suffered deep wounds in battle.
4. "They cannot find that path, which first was shown, But wander to and fro in ways unknown, . . ." (From Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene,* pub.1590–96)

3. SYNONYMS

1. c
2. e
3. f
4. b
5. a
6. d

4. LATIN WORDS

1. consist
2. explore
3. complain
4. disrespect

Early Modern English: Answers

5. SPELLING

1. certain
2. compelled
3. deceit
4. enchanted
5. several
6. shady
7. slumbering
8. stretched
9. win

6. ELIZABETHAN ENGLISH

1. I have told you of the king's love for music.
2. Follow your own advice and never question it.
3. We have been brought up to love music.
4. "A shrilling trumpet sounded from on high,
   and unto (into) battle bade themselves
   address: . . . "
   (From Edmund Spenser's *The Fairie Queene*,
   pub. 1590–96)

7. GREEK WORDS IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

1. music
2. sphere
3. politics
4. economy
5. cone
6. phenomenon

8. DOUBLETS

1 – c, j
2 – e, g
3 – d, f
4 – b, i
5 – a, h

Early Modern English: Answers

9. CHANGES IN THE MEANINGS OF WORDS

adventure: an undertaking involving danger and unknown risks. Fr *aventure* from L *adventus,* past participle of *advenire* (to arrive).

read: to receive or take in the sense of letters or symbols. ME *reden* (to advise or interpret); from OE *raedan* (to advise).

courage: mental or moral strength to persevere and withstand danger or fear. ME *corage,* from OF, from L *cor* (heart).

prowl: to move about stealthily as if in search of prey. From ME *prollen;* earlier source unknown.

await: to wait for; to be in store for ("A surprise awaited her on her birthday"). ME *awaiten,* from L *a-* (*ad-*) + ME *waiten,* OF *waitier* (to watch).

10. LATIN PREFIXES AND ROOTS

Latin Root	Meaning
1. causa	lawsuit
2. facere	to do or make
3. locare	to place
4. pretium	price
5. signare	to mark
6. trahere	to pull or draw

Students should see that the *d* in *ad-* has changed to match the initial consonant in each Latin root. This change is made for ease of pronunciation.

Early Modern English: Answers

11. GREEK WORDS IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

1. perimeter
2. diameter
3. graphic
4. autograph
5. diagram

12. CHANGES IN GRAMMAR

1. The mistress whom I serve . . .
   (use personal pronoun *whom*)
2. There goes the most perfect man
   That ever England bred a Gentleman.
   (remove double superlative *most perfectst*)
3. The first of gold, which this inscription bears . . .
   (use impersonal pronoun *which*)
4. But stay, here come the gardeners . . .
   (use plural verb form *come*)
5. I cannot go any further, *or* I can go no further . . .
   (remove double negative)

Early Modern English: Answers

13. CHANGES IN MEANING

1. brave (adj.): having courage; dauntless. MF, from Old Spanish *bravo* (courageous, wild); from L *barbarus* (barbarous). The earlier meanings still apply as well.

2. wit: the power to evoke laughter by remarks showing verbal ingenuity and swift perception. ME *witen,* OE *witan;* related to Old High German *wizzan* (to know); possibly derived from L *vidēre* (to see). The earlier meanings still apply as well.

3. secure: easy in mind; having no doubt. L *securus,* from *se* (without) + *cura* (care). The earlier meaning is now considered archaic.

4. conceit: excessively favorable opinion of one's own worth or virtue. ME *conceyte* or *conceipt,* derived from ME *conceiven;* from L *concipere* (to take in fully). The idea of "a fanciful idea" or "an elaborate metaphor" is still used in discussing poetry in particular.

5. mediocrity: the quality or state of being ordinary, of moderate or low quality. ME, from MF *mediocrite,* from L *mediocris,* literally "halfway up the mountain" (*medi-* half + *ocris* stony mountain). The word now carries a negative connotation of limited ability or low quality; the more desirable traits of moderation and temperance are not now implied by the word.

Early Modern English: Answers

14. WORDS FROM THE LATIN LANGUAGE

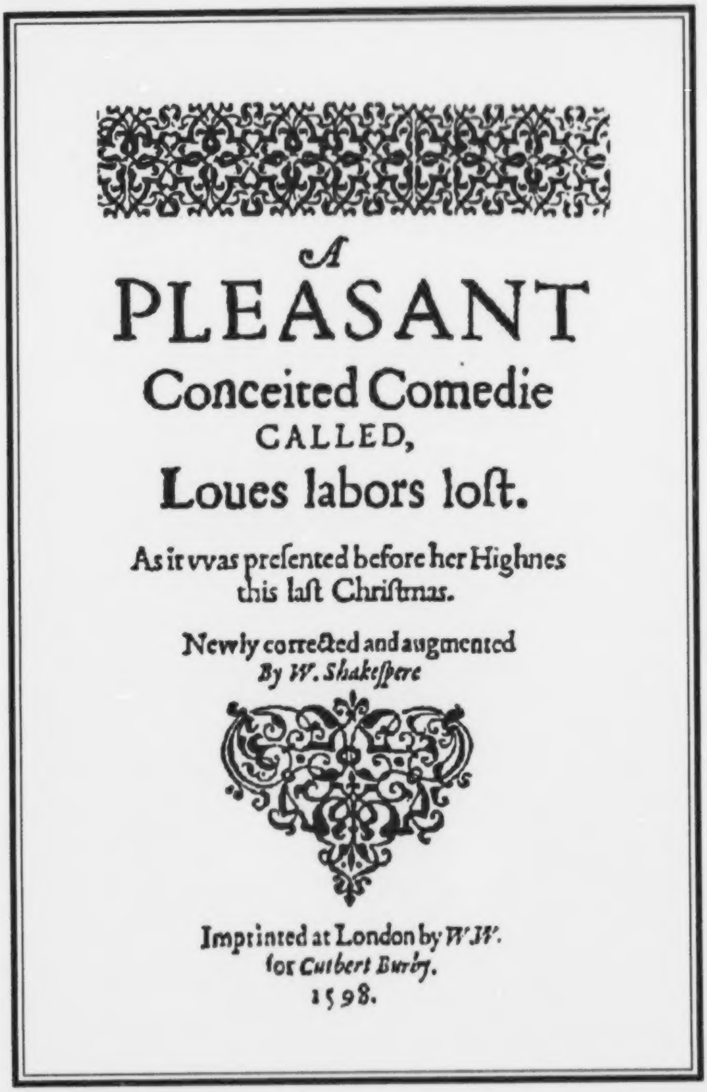
1. *abduct:* to carry someone away by force
   Latin prefix: *ab-* (away)
   Latin root: *ducere* (to lead)
2. *succumb:* yield to superior force
   Latin prefix: *sub-* (under)
   Latin root: *cumbere* (to lie down)
3. *collect:* to bring together in one place
   Latin prefix: *com-* (with, together); assimilated as *col-*
   Latin root: *legere* (to gather)
4. *effect* (noun): something that follows a certain cause
   (verb): to cause something to happen
   Latin prefix: *ex-* (out of, away from)
   Latin root: *facere* (to make or do)
5. *offer:* to present for acceptance or rejection
   Latin prefix: *ob-* (toward)
   Latin root: *ferre* (to carry)

Early Modern English: Answers

15. WORDS FROM THE GREEK LANGUAGE

1. *glossary:* a collection of specialized terms with their meanings.
   Gr. *gloss-, glosso-*: tongue, language
2. *apology:* an admission of error or discourtesy
   Gr. *log-, logo-*: speech, word, thought
3. *agonize:* to suffer anguish or torture
   Gr. *agōn:* contest, struggle
4. *tactical:* relating to small-scale actions serving a larger purpose
   Gr. *-tactic* (*taktikos*): fit for arranging or ordering

If students know that the word *logos* forms the root of *apology,* then misspellings such as *apoligize* are less likely to occur even if the word is not pronounced carefully.



A
PLEASANT
Conceited Comedie
CALLED,
Loues labors loſt.

As it vvas preſented before her Highnes
this laſt Chriſtmas.

Newly corrected and augmented
By W. Shakeſpere

Imprinted at London by *W.W.*
for *Cutbert Burby.*
1598.

American English: Exercises

In Chapter V on American English in *A Guide to Understanding* we saw how the language of Shakespeare's day came to America in the early seventeenth century and how it changed to some degree, especially with the modification of spellings advocated by Noah Webster. However, the differences between British and American English (pronunciation notwithstanding) are far less important than the similarities.

> If the effect of America and the New World on Modern English has been socially significant, grammatically it has been very slight. . . . The principal lexical consequence has been a relative handful of words (excluding place names) borrowed from the Indians, a good many new meanings attached to old words, and an abundance of new compound words: *space age, cocktail hour, coffee break*, and so on. But in comparison with the over half a million words in the language and the multi-million meanings attached to those words, the lexical differences between American and British English are minor, and while the number of new meanings and compounds coined on this side of the Atlantic is not inconsiderable, they are still a small minority in the total lexicon, and not a significant part of the central core vocabulary. (Joseph M. Williams, *Origins of the English Language;* New York: The Free Press, 1975, p. 109)

In the following exercises we will

- give examples showing how the language was used in America in the past,
- focus on words borrowed from Spanish and Native American languages, and
- point out a few differences between British and American English.

American English: Exercises
(Answers begin on page 146.)

Name ______________________________

1. SPELLING AND SYNTAX IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

Read the following passage from William Bradford's *Of Plimoth Plantation* for the year 1623.

> They haveing but one boat left and she not over well fitted, they were devided into severall companies, 6. or 7. to a gangg or company, and so wente out with a nett they had bought, to take bass & such like fish, by course, every company knowing their turne. No sooner was ye boate discharged of what she brought, but ye next company tooke her and wente out with her.

Write the modern spelling for each of these words:

1. gangg ___________
2. devided ___________
3. severall ___________
4. wente ____________
5. ye ______________
6. turne ____________

Now answer these questions:

7. How could the meaning of the opening passage "They haveing but one boat left" be made clear in modern terms?
8. How would we write "to take bass & such like fish" in modern terms?
9. What is the meaning of the passage "No sooner was ye boate discharged of what she brought"? How could it be made more clear to the modern reader, especially in relation to the rest of the sentence?

American English: Exercises

Name ______________________________

2. SPELLING IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

The following passage was written by Roger Williams (c. 1603–1683), the English-born clergyman who established the settlement of Providence in the Rhode Island colony in 1636. Read the excerpt in the original and then write the present-day spellings of the words listed below the passage.

> That the Civill Power may erect and establish what forme of civill Government may seeme in wisedome most meet, I acknowledge the proposition to be most true, both in it self, and also considered with the end of it, that a civill Government is an Ordinance of God, to conserve the civill peace of people, so farre as concernes their Bodies and Goods, as formerly hath been said.

1. civill ________
2. forme ________
3. wisedome ________
4. it self ________
5. farre ____________
6. concernes _______
7. hath ____________

8. Notice that the word *meet* is used as an adjective in the passage "may seem in wisedome most meet." Look up this use of the word in the dictionary and write the appropriate meaning here:

____

American English: Exercises

Name ______________________________

3. SPELLING IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

The following words are taken from the journals and diaries kept by George Washington and by John Adams in the 1740s and 1750s. Rewrite these words with their modern spellings and then answer the questions below.

1. returnd
2. finish'd
3. rain'd
4. catchd
5. raind
6. every thing
7. our Selves
8. my self
9. superiour
10. despize
11. honourable
12. publick

Look at the first five words. What conclusions can you draw about treatment of the past tense in the middle of the eighteenth century?

Words 6–8 show spellings of compounds that differ from those used today. What two differences do you find?

Words 9–12 give spellings that reflect earlier conventions. Use an unabridged dictionary to see if you can figure out why these spellings were used and when they changed.

American English: Exercises

Name ______________________________

4. AMERICAN ENGLISH IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Richard Bland (1710–1776), an eighteenth-century Virginia aristocrat, was one of the most articulate political thinkers of his day and was much concerned with the relationship between the colonies and England. The following passage was written by Bland as a protest against the Pistole Fee (1753–1755), one of the many taxes levied by England against the colonies.

> The Rights of the Subjects are so secured by Law that they cannot be deprived of the least part of their property without their own consent. Upon this Principle of Law, the Liberty and Property of every Person who has the felicity to live under a British Government is founded. The Question then ought not to be about the smallness of the demand but the Lawfulness of it. For if it is against Law, the same Power which imposes one Pistole may impose an Hundred, and this not in one instance only but in every case in which this Leviathan of Power shall think fit to exercise its authority.

Look in a dictionary to find the meaning of the following words used in Bland's statement. Be sure to find the meaning that is most appropriate for each situation.

1. secured:
2. felicity:
3. founded:
4. pistole:
5. instance:
6. Leviathan:

American English: Exercises

Name ______________________________

5. SPELLING AND MEANING IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

The following words are from Benjamin Franklin's *Autobiography*, written between 1771 and 1789. Write the modern spellings for the first five words. Then use a dictionary to find the meaning of the last five items, words that were important in Franklin's day but are less often used today. (Be sure to find the meaning that applies to Franklin's day.)

1. extream: ________________

2. enjoy'd: __________________

3. thro': ______________________

4. endeavour: ______________

5. us'd: ______________________

6. ironmonger: ______________________________

7. journeyman: ______________________________

8. smith: ___________________________________

9. mercantile: ______________________________

10. constable: ______________________________

American English: Exercises

Name ______________________________

6. VOCABULARY IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

The following words are taken from Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The House of the Seven Gables* (1850). Many of these words are not now used in everyday speech but were known to the reader of the nineteenth century. Use a collegiate or unabridged dictionary to find the meaning of each word and write that meaning in the space provided. In the parentheses indicate the language in which each word originated: Latin (L), Greek (Gk), or some other source (OE, ME, Fr).

1. epoch ______________________________( )
2. magnate ______________________________( )
3. edifice ______________________________( )
4. lattice ______________________________( )
5. venerable ______________________________( )

American English: Exercises

Name ______________________________

7. WORDS BORROWED FROM SPANISH AND NATIVE AMERICAN LANGUAGES

As European settlers moved westward across America, they absorbed a number of words from the languages of the native Americans in the eastern and central parts of the country and of the Spanish people in the southwest. Look up each word in a dictionary to find its origin and meaning, and indicate the specific Indian language when this is given. (You may find reference to *Nahuatl:* This is the language of the Aztec Indians.) Also be sure to look for the correct entry when several are given (as with the word *squash,* for example).

1. mustang:
2. totem:
3. bonanza:
4. squash:
5. canyon:
6. tomato:
7. plaza:
8. ranch:
9. tornado:

American English: Exercises

Name ______________________________

8. BRITISH AND AMERICAN ENGLISH

Some words used in America today have meanings that are different from their meanings in Britain, even though the words are spelled the same. In some cases, words are used in Britain for objects or concepts that are labeled differently in America. Given below are British words with special meanings that do not carry over exactly into American English. Search the various entries in a collegiate or unabridged dictionary to find the *British* meaning for each word and give its American equivalent.

1. boot (n):
2. lift (n):
3. biscuit:
4. bonnet:
5. dustbin:
6. caravan:
7. lorry:
8. crisp (n):

These last two won't be in the dictionary, but you can probably guess them.

9. chocolate beans:
10. basketball boots:

American English: Exercises

Name ______________________________

9. FORMING NEW WORDS

Throughout its history, the English language has borrowed words from other languages and has also formed new words using a number of processes. For example, two words can be joined to form a *compound* word, as was often done by the Anglo-Saxons (*renboga* = rainbow). The many words borrowed from Latin could be changed in meaning or part of speech by the use of *affixes* (*complete - incomplete; admit - admission*).

Other processes can be used to create new words. For example, parts of two words can be blended to create a new one (*MOtor hoTEL = motel*); a word can be *clipped*, with a part used to represent the whole (*flu* for *influenza*); or an *acronym* can be formed using the initial letters in a term containing several words (NASA = National Aeronautics and Space Administration).

In the first blank space after each word on the next page, indicate by letter the source of that word (as given in the second column under SOURCE). In the second blank space, use the following abbreviations to show the process used to form the new word: Clipping (Cl); Blending (Bl); Acronym (Acr).

WORD	SOURCE
1. ad ___, ____	a. sound navigation ranging
2. camcorder ___, ___	b. Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries
3. radar ___, ___	c. delicatessen
4. OPEC ___, ___	d. video camera/sound recorder
5. quasar ___, ___	e. radio detecting and ranging
6. deli ___, ___	f. advertisement
7. sonar ____, ____	g. quasi-stellar (objects resembling stars)

American English: Exercises

Name ______________________________

10. ETYMOLOGY

Look at these Modern English words and then look at the words from other languages listed on the next page. After each Modern English word, indicate which of the other languages provided the elements used in that word. Don't write complete words from the other languages; just indicate the sources (OE, Fr, L, Gk).

MODERN ENGLISH WORDS:

1. helicopter ___/___
2. automobile ___/___
3. outnumber ___/___
4. overabundant ___/___
5. sandpaper ___/___
6. semicircle ___/___
7. speedometer___/___
8. television ___/___
9. undernourished ___/___
10. microscope ___/___

American English: Exercises

SOURCES OF THESE WORDS:

OLD ENGLISH (OE):

ofer (over)

sant (sand)

ūt (out)

spēd (speed)

under (under; from Ger. untar)

LATIN (L):

circus (circle)

semi (half)

videre, visus (to see)

mobilis (from movēre, to move)

GREEK (Gk):

heliko (spiral, helix)

papyros (paper)

pteron (wing)

tēle- (distant, far off)

micro- (small)

auto- (self, same)

skopos (from skeptesthai, to look at)

metron (measure)

FRENCH (Fr):

abondant (abundant)

nourrir (to nourish)

nombre (number)

American English: Answers

1. SPELLING AND SYNTAX IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

1. gang
2. divided
3. several
4. went
5. the
6. turn
7. Because they had only one boat left . . .
8. To take (catch) bass and other fish of that type . . .
9. As soon as one boat emptied its contents . . .

2. SPELLING IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

1. civil
2. form
3. wisdom
4. itself
5. far
6. concerns
7. has
8. meet: precisely adapted to fit a situation

American English: Answers

3. SPELLING IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

1. returned
2. finished
3. rained
4. caught
5. rained
6. everything
7. ourselves
8. myself
9. superior
10. despise
11. honorable
12. public

Past tense was often formed by adding only *-d* or *'d* (rather than *-ed*) to the base word (including *catch*). The two spellings of *rained* show that clear, consistent principles had not been established by the middle of the eighteenth century.

Compounds were frequently open, with the second word sometimes capitalized.

The endings *-our, -ize,* and *-ick* are used in British English; *-our* reflected the French source of the word. In the early nineteenth century, Noah Webster effected many of the changes found in American spellings today.

American English: Answers

4. AMERICAN ENGLISH IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

1. secured: guaranteed, put beyond risk of loss (As mentioned in Exercise 13 in Early Modern English, this word is from the Latin *se,* without, + *cura,* care.)
2. felicity: happiness, good fortune (L *felix* means "happy, fruitful")
3. founded: established; set or grounded on something solid
4. pistole: a gold coin used in Europe. This word, which originally referred to a Spanish coin, entered Middle English in the sixteenth century.
5. instance: an individual event or example used to illustrate a category; a specific example brought forward to prove or disprove a generalization
6. Leviathan: a large sea animal or ocean-going ship. It also came to refer to the state, especially to a totalitarian government with a large bureaucracy. It comes from the Hebrew word *liwyāthān,* a sea monster defeated by Yahweh (God of the Hebrews) in various scriptural accounts.

American English: Answers

5. SPELLING AND MEANING IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

1. extreme
2. enjoyed
3. through
4. endeavor
5. used
6. ironmonger: a dealer in iron and hardware
7. journeyman: a worker who has learned a trade and works for an employer, usually on a day-to-day basis
8. smith: anyone who works in metals
9. mercantile: relating to merchants or trading
10. constable: a public officer responsible for keeping the peace

6. VOCABULARY IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

1. epoch: An instant in time or a period of time (Gk)
2. magnate: A person of rank or influence (L)
3. edifice: A large or massive structure (L)
4. lattice: A framework of crossed wood or metal strips (ME *latis*, Fr. *lattis*)
5. venerable: calling forth respect through age or attainment (L)

American English: Answers

7. WORDS BORROWED FROM SPANISH AND NATIVE AMERICAN LANGUAGES

1. mustang: Sp. *mestengo,* stray animal; it came to mean a wild horse of the plains in western North America

2. totem: Ojibwa nintōtēm; an animal or other object that serves as a symbol of a family or clan

3. bonanza: Sp. word for *prosperity* (literally *fair weather*); it came to mean a rich vein of gold or silver ore and, by extension, any source of great wealth

4. squash: shortened form of Natick and Narraganset Indian *askutasquash,* a fleshy fruit related to gourds and pumpkins

5. canyon: Sp. *cañon,* a deep narrow valley with steep sides

6. tomato: Nahuatl (Aztec) *tomatl,* rounded red or yellow pulpy berry of the tomato plant

7. plaza: Sp., from L *platea,* broad street; a public square in a town, an open area featuring walkways and shops and located near public buildings

8. ranch: Sp. *rancho,* a large farm for raising horses, cattle, or sheep

9. tornado: Sp. *tronada,* thunderstorm; a violent whirling wind accompanied by a funnel-shaped cloud.

American English: Answers

8. BRITISH AND AMERICAN ENGLISH

1. boot: trunk of a car
2. lift: elevator
3. biscuit: cookie or cracker
4. bonnet: hood of a car
5. dustbin: garbage can/trash can
6. caravan: trailer
7. lorry: truck
8. crisp: potato chip
9. chocolate beans: M & Ms
10. basketball boots: sneakers (especially high-tops)

9. FORMING NEW WORDS

1. ad: f, Cl
2. camcorder: d, Bl (CAMera/reCORDER)
3. radar: e, Acr (RAdio Detecting And Ranging)
4. OPEC: b, Acr
5. quasar: g, Bl (QUASi-stellAR)
6. deli: c, Cl
7. sonar: a, Acr (SOund NAvigation Ranging)

American English: Answers

10. ETYMOLOGY

1. Gk/Gk
2. Gk/L
3. OE/Fr
4. OE/Fr
5. OE/Gk
6. L/L
7. OE/Gk
8. Gk/L
9. OE/Fr
10. Gk/Gk

III

Related Materials Available from ERIC

The following summaries provide information about a number of documents available from ERIC. These documents deal with various aspects of vocabulary study and word history and can be used to supplement the present monograph.

Balmuth, Mariam. (1982, Nov.). Early English Dictionaries in Historical Perspective. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the New York State Reading Association. 15 pages. ED 227 468.

For some time there has been "an interest in the gathering and conserving of words and in the locating of authoritative statements about word forms and meanings, an interest that is clearly discernible in our society at this time" (p. 1). This paper connects this interest "with the climate that led to the first flowering of English dictionaries back in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries" (p. 2).

Robert Cawdrey's *A Table Alphabeticall* of 1604 was the first book to consist solely of English words listed alphabetically and defined by other English words without recourse to Latin or any other language. Although Latin remained the language of status in England into the sixteenth century, the increasing number of books published in English and the growing vocabulary of that language led to a larger and larger number of readers and thus to a greater need to define the words that were being added to the language.

The major part of this paper is devoted to a summary of English dictionaries from Cawdrey through Cockeram and others in the later seventeenth century up to the dictionary published by Samuel Johnson in 1755. The brief coverage of the development of dictionaries during this period contains worthwhile information relating not only to the characteristics of the various dictionaries but also to the situations in society that prevailed at different times within this period.

Barratt, Leslie. (1988, Winter). Ten Things That Teachers Should Teach (and Students Should Learn) about Language. *Contemporary Education,* v. 59 n.2, pp 70–71. EJ 376 985.

Barratt begins by stating that linguistics is important even though English teachers often feel it is not:

> . . . the general lessons that linguists have learned about language are crucially relevant to teachers and can be stated simply enough for any student to understand. If teachers want to create an environment in which their students are motivated to learn the conventions of formal writing, they must make clear the place that these conventions have in language and the place of the student's own language in the overall picture of language (p. 70).

In the list of items that should be taught about language, the author stresses that students must be shown that formal writing and speaking require a variety of English that is different from that used in informal writing and speaking. Also (and this is particularly relevant to this book), students should see that "the features of formal English are arbitrary; they exist because of historical circumstances, not because they were once clearer or more logical, but because they were the forms of the educated upper class" (p. 70). (The historical survey we have given in our two books on Word History should make it clear that many conventions of the language are rooted in centuries past and originated because of particular circumstances of pronunciation or orthography at the time.)

The author points out that students need to know that all languages change, and the conventions of formal written and spoken English have also changed over time. "Not everyone knows the features or conventions of formal English, but many students equate this with not knowing the language" (p. 71). Finally, a broad overview of language can evolve as students become aware of the principles covered in this article and of the historical development of the language. Students need to view formal language within the broader context of the social role it plays. "Once they realize the source of many formal rules, students will stop looking for perfectly logical rules to guide them" (p. 71).

Broudy, Harry S. (1988). Images, Words, and Thoughts. *Reading Psychology: An International Quarterly,* v. 9, pp. 315–21. EJ 392 010

The focus of this article is stated clearly at the beginning:

> Imagery in language is found in figures of speech, in root meanings of words, and in general usage of which a user is unaware. A loss in general literacy occurs as the potential for imagery decreases through lack of understanding of the root meanings of words (p. 315).

Schooling often tends to emphasize the *replicative* uses of instruction—the ability of students to reproduce items taught in the classroom—with less attention to the *associative* aspect of learning: the ability of students to utilize concepts in problem solving. Rarely considered is the *interpretive* use of information, "in which concepts studied in the various disciplines are used to structure what is being read or discussed" (p. 316).

> Even more conjectural are the *associative* remains of such studies. What resources, acquired in school, come into consciousness or subconsciousness when a topic is being discussed or read? I have called these resources the "allusionary base" (p. 316).

Reading involves interpretation of a symbol system: the more abstract the referents of the symbols (as found in mathematics and science), the less imagery is involved. Studies have shown that students can understand and define words more readily when they have a clear image of what the word represents. "Less attention has been paid to the generalizing potential of images, whereby highly complex combinations of ideas and symbols can be apprehended directly through an image" (p. 317).

Broudy points out that loss of the root meanings of words contributes to a weakening of imagery in language and thus creates an obstacle to general literacy:

> For example, the word "penitentiary" is accurately defined as a prison. The notion or image of doing penance is pretty well deleted from the meaning of penitentiary in ordinary usage—and with the deletion goes the concreteness of the image (p. 317).

College students with some knowledge of Latin and others with no knowledge of this language were asked to respond to words such as *transportation* and *conspiracy* that contain clear Latin roots.

> While the Latinists often did not betray their familiarity with the root meanings of the words, . . . the non-Latinists never alluded to them. When one considers the various linguistic contributions to the English language, ignorance of these contributions deprives one of rich stores of imagery that contribute to the vividness of its vocabulary (p. 318).

Although there is no question that students must master the mechanics of the symbol system that constitutes reading, the role of imagery in the use and understanding of language is of great importance as well. "While poetry is the obvious literary medium for this enrichment, the visual and auditory arts can make their contribution, often with even more directness and force" (p. 320). As more and more people from other countries try to master English, "a major part of the task will be to convey the imagery that English presupposes and to be aware of the imagery the foreign learner is bringing to the English vocabulary" (p. 320).

Small, Robert C., Jr. (1987, Nov.). Linguistics in the English Class. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Council of Teachers of English, Los Angeles. 18 pages. ED 289 171.

Designed for secondary school English teachers who want to help their students develop enthusiasm for words, their histories, and the way language structures words to produce meaning, this paper offers suggestions for a program of study employing dictionary projects and personal experience. The paper describes making a class dictionary of teen language, involving activities such as examining dictionaries to see what words they contain, examining dictionary histories, deciding how to select words and write definitions, and accounting for changes in meanings of various words.

This paper argues that this broader, deeper type of language study remedies past problems of paying exclusive attention to memorization and mechanical skill, because students begin to understand the nature of the language system they have mastered. The paper suggests additional language lesson plans based on different areas of linguistic studies, including units on generating spelling rules from observations of spelling patterns, proposing a reform of English spelling, illustrating a definition, compiling lists of morphemes, and compiling sequences of words with relative shades of meaning.

Thelen, Judith N. (1986, April). Vocabulary Instruction and Meaningful Learning. *Journal of Reading,* v. 29 n. 7, pp. 603–609. EJ 331 211.

Word meaning is closely related to reading comprehension, and for this reason it is important for vocabulary instruction to be significant to students. However, it is not helpful simply to have students look up a new word in a dictionary or glossary and use it in a sentence. "Meaningful learning occurs when the learner attempts to relate new information to what he or she already knows" and is dependent on the proper organization of two factors: "the reader's cognitive structure and the material to be learned" (p. 603).

"Cognitive structure may be defined as all of an individual's *existing* knowledge, which . . . is incorporated into abstract conceptual frameworks, or schema" (pp. 603–604). If students do have a framework of existing ideas about a certain subject, and if they are told where the new material fits into that framework, then they should be able to assimilate new ideas and make them a meaningful part of their knowledge about a given subject. On the other hand, simply "teaching facts as ends in themselves cannot result in meaningful learning" (p. 604).

The author advocates following the "top down" model, beginning with general concepts and working down to more detailed information. The advantage of this approach is that it allows learners to assimilate and retain new information more readily "because their cognitive structure can provide file folders for the new material. By the time the teacher gets to literal, factual information, the student already has a schema to relate it to" (p. 605).

Although this article is primarily concerned with helping students develop broad schemata to which they can then relate the specific information found in their textbooks, the principles outlined here can also be applied to the study of language itself. Obviously it would be desirable to begin with words familiar to students in the upper grades, words such as *transportation* or *biography* which can then be studied in terms of their Latin or Greek origins and the meaning of their elements.

It would also be desirable to begin with affixes such as *un-* or *-hood* in familiar words such as *unlock* or *childhood* and then trace both the roots and the affixes back to their origins in Old English. This would make it possible to begin with broad concepts using words already familiar to students; from this starting point, the teacher could lead to more detailed information about the historical origin and development of roots and affixes. Students would not only see that these concepts have developed over time but would also achieve a deeper understanding of the meaning of these words. This could also establish a firm basis that would allow the kind of understanding of imagery advocated by Broudy (see above).

Tompkins, Gail E., & David B. Yaden, Jr. (1986). Answering Students' Questions about Words. TRIP: Theory & Research into Practice. National Council of Teachers of English, Urbana, IL. 86 pages. ED 268 548.

Students often ask questions such as these about the English language:

- Why do we sometimes have several words—like *street* and *road* and *avenue*—that seem to mean much the same thing?

- Why do words such as *island* and *neighbor* have silent letters?

- Why can't we say *childs* and *mouses* instead of children and mice?

The answers to these and similar questions can be found by studying the history of the English language.

Because language is a reflection of the people who speak it, any study of the development of that language must consider the geographic, political, economic, social, and linguistic forces that influenced that development. This booklet addresses these issues by first offering a brief summary of "selected historical aspects of vocabulary growth and orthographic change," including information on various influences that have affected the development of English. The second section gives exercises based on "actual questions that students in grades one through eight have asked while attempting to grapple with our written language system" (p. 2).

The very brief summary of the history of the English language covers the major events and cites some examples of words and other features of the language in each period. A section on borrowing and other sources of new words points out that, as a rule, the language of a conquering power is retained while that of the conquered people either falls into disuse or is assimilated to some extent into the language of the dominant force. Additional words were added by compounding and by using affixes from other languages, especially Latin and Greek.

A discussion of orthography points out that English is similar to a number of other languages in the extent to which it fails to match sound to letter in fixed, predictable patterns. The authors cite research which shows that "it is inevitable, particularly with alphabetic writing systems, that 'language drift' causes the written language to be less faithful in representing its spoken counterpart in one-to-one correspondence as time passes" (pp. 12–13).

Influences that helped to stabilize the development of English are discussed next, beginning with the Latin scribes whose writings began to set a standard for spelling. This process culminated in the early eleventh century when political unity was established in Wessex and the "spelling conventions and writing style of these West Saxon scribes became the standard throughout England and provided a norm which is evident in documents of that period" (p. 17). This tradition of writing in Old English was of course disrupted by the Norman Conquest and by the deteriorating standard of spelling that followed, but by the thirteenth century more writings in English began to appear and the beginning of printing in the late fifteenth century provided the means for establishing a standard of English usage and spelling.

The contributions of Noah Webster are covered briefly, followed by a summary dealing with the questions that arise because the English language continues to change. Students are understandably puzzled by the conflicting demands of standard usage on the one hand and evidence of constant tinkering on the other. The latter is seen every day in signs that advertise "Drive-Thru Service" or "Kwik-Stop Shopping." The authors conclude by stating their belief that "understanding how English words and spellings developed is an essential component of language awareness" (p. 21).

The remainder of this booklet provides background information for teachers and suggests student activities that are called *extensions* "because they grow out of students' curiosity and questions" (p. 23). A number of specific examples provide material for students to use in searching for the etymologies of words, including many that have evolved throughout the development of the language from Old and Middle English as well as from French, Latin, and Greek. Root words and affixes are considered in some detail, while exercises dealing with words from Old English focus on irregular verb forms and plural nouns that originated in the language of the Anglo-Saxons.

The problems inherent in the mismatch between some sounds and symbols in our spelling system are considered next; some of these are also rooted in Old English spellings which more accurately reflected their pronunciation. The remaining exercises deal with homographs and the formation of new words by compounding, clipping (*bicycle* becomes *bike,* for example), and onomatopoeia (so-called "echoic words" such as *buzz, moo,* and *plop*). A brief list of contrasts between British and American spellings is also included.

Students in the middle grades can benefit from working with the material in this booklet, and these exercises can also be used as preparation for the more extensive coverage given in the present book on word history. The exercises provided in this booklet are clearly focused on finding specific information about words and are presented in a way that should hold students' interest and lay the foundation for more extensive work in the later grades.

IV

Annotated Bibliography

The following books provide additional material that will be of great help in pursuing a study of language history. Descriptions of broad-scale studies of the language are given first in Section A, followed in Section B by information on materials designed specifically for classroom use.

A. General Studies of Language History

Burchfield, Robert. (1985). *The English Language.* Oxford and New York: Oxford UP. 194 pages.

Instead of considering the historical periods in terms of their usual designations *Old English, Middle English,* and so on, the author first discusses reasons for changes in language in Chapter 1 before going on to Chapter 2 covering the period "From Runes to Printing." Chapter 3 deals with the period "From William Caxton to George Washington: 1476 to 1776," and Chapter 4, with "The Disjunctive Period: 1776 to the Present Day." Of course this material covers the entire history of the language, but the groupings focus on features *other* than those usually employed in dividing such a study into time periods.

This refreshing approach makes for a lively, interesting narrative. Each of these chapters discusses the development of the language in a running commentary, focusing more on passages illustrating usage and salient features in each period and less on technical details. The author's concern is with the language as a medium of communication, not as a subject for analysis. Such an overview is very helpful because it is succinct and focused; anyone will profit by reading this as his or her first exposure to the history of the English language.

The remaining chapters deal with the development of dictionaries and grammars, with vocabulary, punctuation, and spelling, and with the syntactical arrangement of words. The final chapter considers the dispersion of English as a first or second language in many countries throughout the world.

Claiborne, Robert. (1983). *Our Marvelous Native Tongue: The Life and Times of the English Language.* New York: Times Books. 339 pages.

The twelve chapters of this book trace the development of English from its Indo-European source up to present-day usage in America and other countries throughout the world. The chapters on earlier periods are particularly good for the general reader because they are clear and easily accessible. They also contain much information on the evolution of individual words, information that provides a rich source of material that can be helpful to the classroom teacher. The concluding chapters also provide much up-to-date information on characteristics of contemporary American English, differences between British and American English, and the great variety of words in slang and in the everyday vernacular. The extensive index of words and phrases is most helpful in tracking the origin of *blockhead, barking up the wrong tree,* and other informal locutions.

This book is doubly valuable because it gives the teacher an easily understandable survey of the language throughout history and because it can be used as a source of additional reading for students in the upper grades.

McCrum, Robert, William Cran, & Robert MacNeil. (1986). *The Story of English.* New York: Viking Penguin. 384 pages.

This book complements the series of the same name presented on television a few years ago and now available on videocassette. This TV series would obviously be well worth showing in class if it is available from a library.

Three of the chapters in the book are especially relevant to the study of language history. Chapter 2, "The Mother Tongue," deals with Old and Middle English (the Celts, Anglo-Saxons, Vikings, and Normans) while Chapter 3, "A Muse of Fire," deals with the language in the time of Shakespeare and the first colonies in America. Chapter 4, "The Guid Scots Tongue," includes information on Samuel Johnson's dictionary and on the influence of Gaelic in America as well as in Scotland.

Much material in the book and the TV series deals with English as an international language, focusing on its use in many countries and on its continuing change in areas such as India and the Caribbean. The book will be particularly useful in the classroom because of the many maps and illustrations that help students see art work and manuscripts from centuries past.

Mish, Frederick C. (Ed.). (1989). *Webster's Word Histories.* Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster. 526 pages.

> *Webster's Word Histories* is a brand-new collection of stories about where our words have come from and how their meanings have grown. . . . The book introduces some of the results of scholarly research in the difficult science of etymology but in painless prose that aims to entertain as well as to inform.

The preceding description on the dust jacket of the book clearly summarizes the contents of this collection of more than 1,500 entries and 600 articles. Most entries are brief but give a clear idea of the development of each word, as in the following example taken from the first page of the book:

---

abound see ABUNDANCE
[ME *abounden,* fr. MF *abonder,* fr. L *abundare* to abound, overflow, fr. *ab-* + *undare* to rise in waves, fr. *unda* wave]

Words that require more thorough coverage are discussed in individual articles, some of two pages or more. The word ain't, for example, originated in the late seventeenth century with the contraction *an't* (sometimes *a'n't*) for "am I not." These articles are particularly helpful with words that originated in languages other than Latin; as we might expect, many of these articles are devoted to words that first appeared in Old English or Middle English.

Occasionally an article ends with a statement that the origin of the word remains unknown (*wowser* is such a word), but even in these cases it is most interesting to discover what is known about the evolution of the word over the years. This collection of word histories can provide the classroom teacher with a wealth of material and can also be used by students in their own projects because it is easily understandable and most informative.

Myers, L. M. (1966). *The Roots of Modern English.* Boston: Little, Brown. 323 pages.

This book begins with chapters on the characteristics of language in general, the sounds used in language, and the pre-history of English. Old and Middle English are discussed next, followed by separate chapters on the English Renaissance (1500–1650) and on the following "authoritarian" period (1660–1800) dominated by the search for consistent principles of usage. The last three chapters deal with the spread of English as the British empire expanded, with the background of traditional grammar, and with contemporary developments in America.

The text is very clear and not overly technical, especially in the coverage of complex subjects such as the system of inflections in Old English or the Great Vowel Shift in Early Modern English. Particularly helpful are the extensive passages in Old and Middle English contained in chapters 4 and 5; these are discussed at length and provided with extensive glossaries that can provide teachers with a wealth of material to supplement the examples given in the present book.

Also valuable is the material in Chapter 9, "The Background of Traditional Grammar," which gives examples of particular features of grammar in various periods throughout the history of English. This can help students see how our current conventions developed and will provide a broader frame of reference to which they can relate the discussion of changes in spelling and vocabulary given in this book.

Pyles, Thomas, & John Algeo. (1982, 3rd ed.). *The Origins and Development of the English Language.* New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. 383 pages.

Before considering historical periods in the development of English, this book provides four chapters of background material dealing with languages in general, sounds and spellings in current English, a brief history of writing, and the Indo-European origin of English.

Old English and Middle English are treated in detail in Chapters 5 and 6, followed by extensive coverage of Modern English up to 1800, focusing on sounds and spellings (Chapter 7) as well as forms and syntax (Chapter 8). Developments in recent British and American English are given in Chapter 9.

The last three chapters deal with words and meanings, with the formation of new words from old, and with foreign elements in the English word stock. This last chapter covers loanwords taken not only from the obvious sources (Latin, Greek, French) but also from Spanish, Italian, German, and other languages. A lengthy bibliography is provided, along with an index of modern English words, affixes, and phrases as well as a subject index.

As the authors say, "An aim of this new edition is to make the text more accessible to students who have had no prior study of linguistics or of languages" (p. v). This is certainly the case, and it would be difficult to find a better guide to a study of how the English language has developed. Teachers will find much material that can be used in their presentations to students. New terms are set in boldface and clearly defined, and difficult matters such as word-order in inflected languages are explained clearly. Especially helpful are the illustrations of Old, Middle, and Early Modern English given at the end of Chapters five through eight.

B. Books Designed for Classroom Use

Ayers, Donald M. (1986). *English Words from Latin and Greek Elements.* Second edition revised and expanded by Thomas D. Worthen. Tucson: University of Arizona Press. 290 pages.

This text is intended for a college-level course and is grouped into two parts: Part I containing 25 lessons on Latin and Part II, 25 lessons on Greek. A Teacher's Manual by R. L. Cherry is also available from the same publisher.

Each lesson focuses on a specific feature of the Latin or Greek language: prefixes, combinations of bases, suffixes, semantic change, words from mythology and history, combining forms, Greek words used in science and medicine, and so on. Lessons give clear examples of the use of affixes with roots in both languages; this alone would make the book valuable to language teachers. There are also numerous examples of Latin and Greek words used in sentences to illustrate their meaning in context.

Although intended for college-level work, this text can provide teachers in secondary schools with a wealth of material that can help students understand the vitally important role played by Latin and Greek in expanding the vocabulary of the English language.

Hook, Julius N. (1975). *History of the English Language.* New York: The Ronald Press Co. 372 pages.

This text is designed specifically to provide teachers at all grade levels with a guide for helping students undertake the study of words. Even elementary-school students can begin to become aware of the variations in different types of speech in various parts of the country and this can lead to a study of different pronunciations of words in the past. They can also discover the source of the suffix *-logy,* for example, and see its use in many words such as *biology* and *psychology* (p. 7). Hook stresses the value of such study and experience to young students:

> A point of great importance must be reiterated: all this learning about words, this play with words, results in the learning of concepts. Words represent concepts. The child who has learned much about words will find it much easier in later years to master the concepts of science, social studies, literature; he will find it much easier as an adult to make the constant adjustments that societal changes require (p. 8).

Each period in the history of English is considered in chronological order, with concluding chapters on developments in America and on how words enter the language and change over time. Beginning with the material on Old English, every chapter ends with a number of Classroom Activities that provide suggestions for additional exercises or long-range projects that can supplement the exercises given in the present book.

For example, at the end of the chapter on Old English there are suggestions that some students might want to look more deeply into the history of England and trace the movements of the various peoples that have lived there. Another suggestion is for students to look for place-names in England that evolved from the Latin *castrum* (armed camp) that changed to *chester* and *caster* in English (Lancaster, Dorchester, etc.). In another exercise a list of Latin words is given; students can try to figure out their modern English equivalent (*ancora* - anchor; *butyrum* - butter; etc.).

Similar exercises are given at the end of all other chapters dealing with historical periods. These exercises will be good to use with younger children through the middle grades because they are fairly general and involve detective work that is interesting and has immediate application to their own experience. Such exercises can provide a good foundation for those given in this book.

Millward, Celia M. (1989). *A Biography of the English Language.* New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston. 386 pages.

The author states the purpose of this text at the outset:

> This book is designed primarily for a one- or two- semester introductory course in the history of the English language at the advanced undergraduate or graduate level. It can also be the basic text for a self-taught course in the subject. It does not assume any prior training in either linguistics or the history of English (p. v).

Although some of the material in this text may be too advanced for high-school students, there is much information that will be most helpful to teachers.

The first chapter focuses on features that are common to all languages and also discusses why and how all languages change. Chapters 2 (Phonology), 3 (Writing), and 4 (Language Families and Indo-European) contain much technical material but also include information that can be useful in a high-school course, especially on the process by which the Germanic languages emerged from Indo-European (pp. 54–64).

Chapter 5 on Old English begins with a brief summary of external history before moving to a study of phonology and morphology, including thorough coverage of inflections. Of particular value is the discussion of the lexicon, with information on loanwords and on the formation of new words (pp. 99–107). Chapter 6 on Middle English follows the same plan as Chapter 5, beginning with material on phonology and morphology. Again, the section on the lexicon is particularly helpful, providing information on the influence not only of French but also of the Scandinavian, Latin, Celtic, and Dutch languages on Middle English (pp. 169–180).

Chapter 7 on Early Modern English first discusses cultural, political, and technological influences before going on to consideration of characteristics of the language itself. The section on the lexicon of Early Modern English considers Latin and Greek words as well as loans from a number of other languages and also deals with the formation of new words by compounding and affixing (pp. 243–251). Chapter 8 on Present-Day English also includes a valuable section on the lexicon, showing how more and more languages such as Italian, Spanish, and German have contributed to the vocabulary of modern English (pp. 280–290). The final chapter (9) gives an overview of English as it is used in a number of countries around the world.

Milosh, Joseph E., Jr. (1972). *Teaching the History of the English Language in the Secondary Classroom.* Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English. 93 pages.

The author begins by stating that this monograph is neither a curriculum guide nor a handbook of preplanned lessons:

> Rather, the monograph is an argument that in the high school greater attention can be given to the history of the language with significant results, an argument illustrated and I hope strengthened—within the confines of this series—by a sort of guided tour of appropriate content, resources, and techniques (p. 4).

The first two chapters discuss language history in broad terms, first with attention to the need for teachers to understand this history and then to a discussion of the reasons for bringing the study of language history into the classroom. Among the reasons given, two may be cited here because of their particular importance.

> First, this study broadens the student's awareness of *language* itself as a medium of human communication, not as a series of rules to be learned or skills to be mastered; it is "a subject students might well examine not only to learn more about their particular culture and the culture of man generally, but to discover their active roles in the continuation of those cultures" (p. 20).
>
> Second, the study of this history shows that "rules" of grammar and spelling have evolved over centuries; they were not established by *fiat* at some time in the distant past and they have changed and continue to change.

The remaining chapters consider content and technique for the classroom and offer suggestions for structuring a unit of study. Among the topics that can be stressed are a definition of language itself, the history of English writing and spelling, grammatical change, development of vocabulary, and semantic change in English, for example. These areas could form the focal points for supplementary activities that build on a knowledge of language history and move beyond it into a study of particular elements of language itself.

In Chapter Four which deals with structuring a unit of study, the author suggests, in addition to the obvious chronological approach, a number of other ways of approaching this study: (1) a reverse chronological approach (moving from what is known about present-day English back into a study of Middle and then Old English); (2) an organization by theme or principle such as word meaning (*semantics*) or relationships among words within the sentence (*syntax*); and (3) a separation of external from internal history by focusing on an element of the language itself (spelling, grammar, vocabulary) and tracing the history of this element across all periods.

Although this monograph does not suggest specific exercises, it does contain a thorough discussion of the value and importance of teaching language history and will be most helpful to teachers because of the broad philosophical background it provides.

Nist, John. (1966). *A Structural History of English.* New York: St. Martin's Press. 426 pages.

This book "combines a traditional history-of-the-language approach with modern linguistic analysis" (p. vii). Each major period is discussed in two related chapters, the first dealing with history, the second, with structure (phonology, morphology, syntax). In addition to his coverage of Old and Middle English, Nist considers more recent English in terms of Early Modern English (1500–1650), Authoritarian English (1650–1800), and Mature Modern English (1800–1920). Concluding chapters deal with American English and with the future of the language.

The chapters on the history of each period will be of particular value to teachers in middle and secondary schools. Each of these chapters begins with a capsule summary of important dates, outstanding persons, and major attributes of the language. For example, Old English is discussed in terms of a number of subdivisions within the overall period: Teutonic invasion, influence of Roman missionaries, creation of a nation culture under Alfred the Great, and Latin and Scandinavian influences, for example. Middle English is also viewed in terms of the initial impact of Norman French, the gradual return to prominence of English, and the final triumph of the language. Discussion of later periods also focuses on prominent features and includes plentiful examples of vocabulary (especially loanwords).

Although the chapters on structure are fairly technical, the chapters on history provide much information that is worthwhile and easily accessible for students and teachers. This material can be used in the upper grades to supplement the information provided in this Resource Book and its companion volume, *A Guide to Understanding.*

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